



# THE GIFT OF FIRE

## TITANIC STRUGGLE

The Titans were the children of Uranus and Gaia. After a 10-year battle, Zeus, the son of Titans Cronus and Rhea, overthrew the Titans and imprisoned them. Prometheus, also the son of a Titan, fought on Zeus's side.

## THE OLYMPIANS

The Greek gods were known as the Olympians after their home on Mount Olympus. Zeus was married to Hera and was the father of many of the Olympian gods.

WHEN GREAT ZEUS overthrew his father, Cronus – as Cronus in turn had overthrown his father, Uranus – he turned against mankind. He intended to destroy the human race and start again. But he was foiled by quick-witted Prometheus.

The name Prometheus means “forethought,” and of all the immortal Titans, Prometheus is the most clever. This was why he had sided with deep-thinking Zeus against brutal Cronus and the other Titans. But Prometheus also champions mankind; some say he even created humans from clay and water.

Prometheus gave human beings the precious gift of thought and taught people many crafts and skills, such as how to study the stars in their orbits, and how to use them to navigate the seas.

*Chariot  
of the sun*

*Prometheus tricks Zeus into taking  
the wrong portion of ox*

*Prometheus teaches mankind  
how to study the stars*





This championship of mankind angered Zeus, and his anger came to a head when Prometheus cheated the gods out of their rightful sacrifice, giving it to mankind instead. Prometheus had slaughtered an ox and divided it into two portions, each wrapped in hide. The large portion was just fat and bones; the small one contained the meat. Prometheus had allotted the small portion to the gods, whereupon Zeus complained. Prometheus smiled and said, "Zeus, most glorious of the gods, choose whichever you like." Of course Zeus chose the large portion. When he saw that he had been tricked by Prometheus, he decided to withhold fire from mankind.

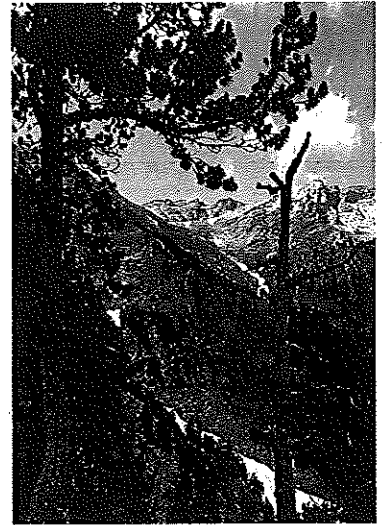
"Let them eat their meat raw," he cried.

But Prometheus outwitted him. He entered Olympus, the home of the gods, stole fire from the chariot of the sun, and carried it back to earth in a fennel plant. Then he showed mankind how to use fire to cook and keep warm.

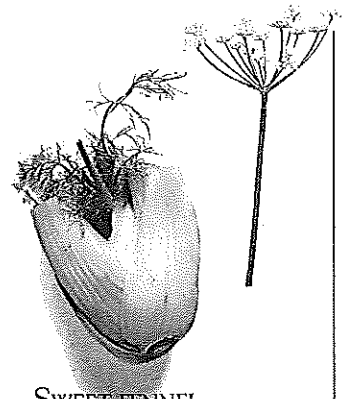
When Zeus saw the glow of fires on earth, he fell into a deadly fury.

Prometheus shows mankind how to use fire to cook and keep warm

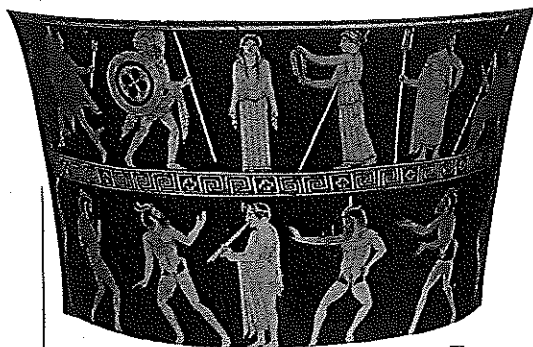
With the fire hidden in a fennel stalk, Prometheus steals away from Mount Olympus



**HOME OF THE GODS**  
Mount Olympus in northern Greece soars to a height of 9,596 ft (2,917 m). The Greeks believed that this mountain was the home of the immortal gods because it was so high it seemed to touch the heavens.



**SWEET FENNEL**  
Prometheus hid fire in a fennel stalk. Sweet fennel is popular in Greece. The leaves are used as an herb, and the fleshy stalk and root are eaten as a vegetable.



#### PANDORA'S JAR

The scene on this Greek vase shows Pandora receiving gifts from the gods. Athena breathed life into her, Aphrodite gave her beauty, Apollo made her musical, Hermes taught her deceit. Pandora possessed all the contradictions of human nature.

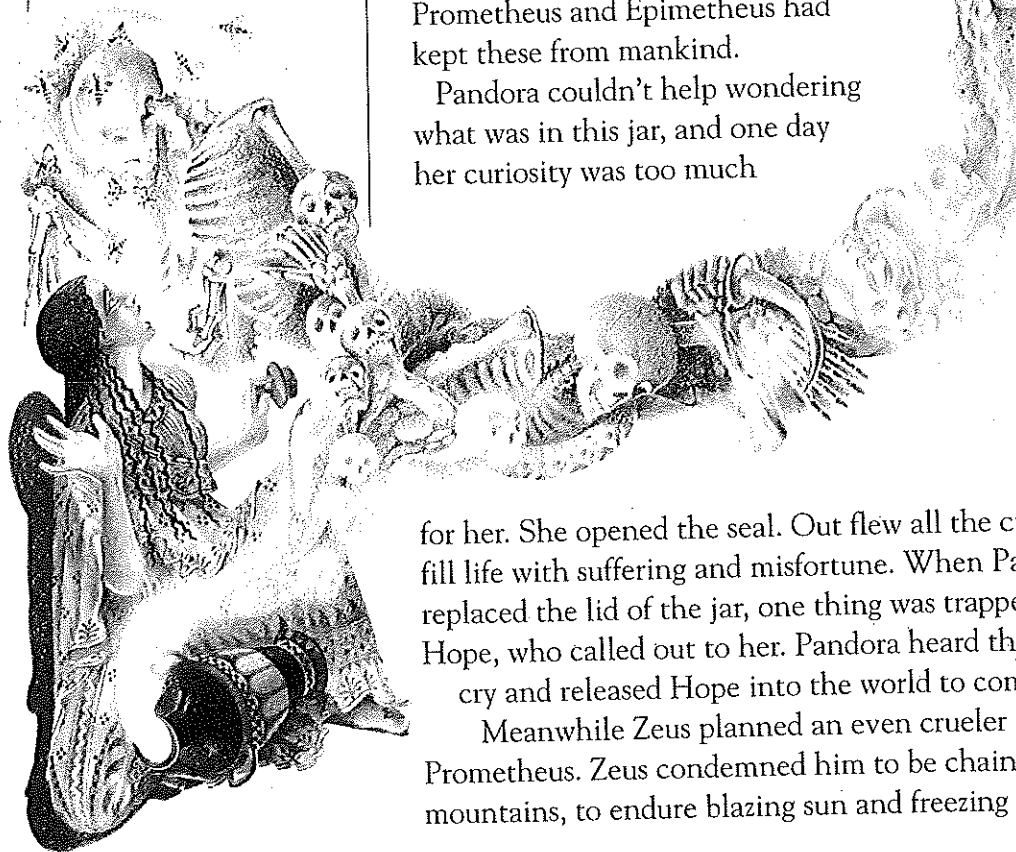
Zeus took a terrible revenge on both Prometheus and mankind for stealing the gift of fire. He ordered the lame smith Hephaestus to make a woman out of clay who would possess the beauty of an immortal goddess but would bring misfortune to the human race. All the gods showered her with personal gifts, and they named her Pandora, which means "all gifted."

Zeus sent Pandora as a present, not to clever Prometheus, but to his slow-witted brother, Epimetheus, whose name means "afterthought." Prometheus had warned his brother not to accept any gift from Zeus, but Epimetheus was so enchanted by Pandora's beauty he took her for his wife.

Now Epimetheus had helped his brother distribute many gifts to mankind, and in his house he had a sealed jar that contained all the ills of disease, old age, and vice. Prometheus and Epimetheus had kept these from mankind.

Pandora couldn't help wondering what was in this jar, and one day her curiosity was too much

*Pandora's curiosity gets the better of her and she opens the jar, freeing all the ills of mankind*



for her. She opened the seal. Out flew all the curses of mankind that fill life with suffering and misfortune. When Pandora, in a panic, replaced the lid of the jar, one thing was trapped at the bottom: Hope, who called out to her. Pandora heard the faint, sad cry and released Hope into the world to comfort mankind.

Meanwhile Zeus planned an even crueler revenge on Prometheus. Zeus condemned him to be chained to a rock in the mountains, to endure blazing sun and freezing cold. Furthermore,



each day an eagle would come to gnaw at his liver, which would grow back again each night so the torment would never end.

But Prometheus did not give in. Although wracked with agony, he mocked Zeus, saying, "I am the only god who knows the secret that will hurl you into oblivion, just like your father before you. You must release me if you wish to save yourself."

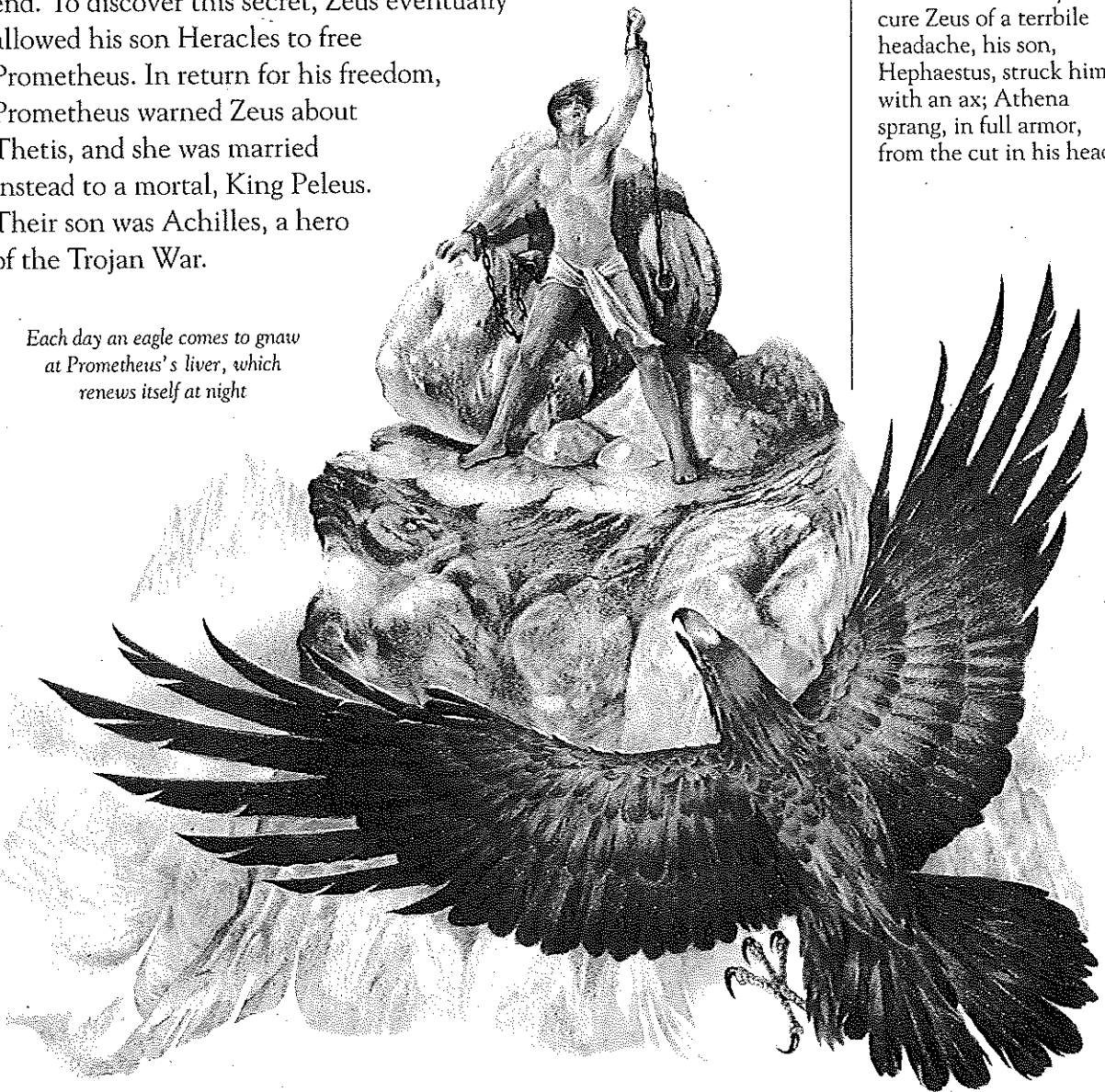
For Prometheus knew that if Zeus made love to the sea nymph Thetis, as he intended, she would bear a son stronger than his father, and Zeus's reign would end. To discover this secret, Zeus eventually allowed his son Heracles to free Prometheus. In return for his freedom, Prometheus warned Zeus about Thetis, and she was married instead to a mortal, King Peleus. Their son was Achilles, a hero of the Trojan War.

*Each day an eagle comes to gnaw at Prometheus's liver, which renews itself at night*



**ZEUS AND HEPHAESTUS**

This detail from a Greek cup depicts a scene from a famous Greek myth: to cure Zeus of a terrible headache, his son, Hephaestus, struck him with an ax; Athena sprang, in full armor, from the cut in his head.

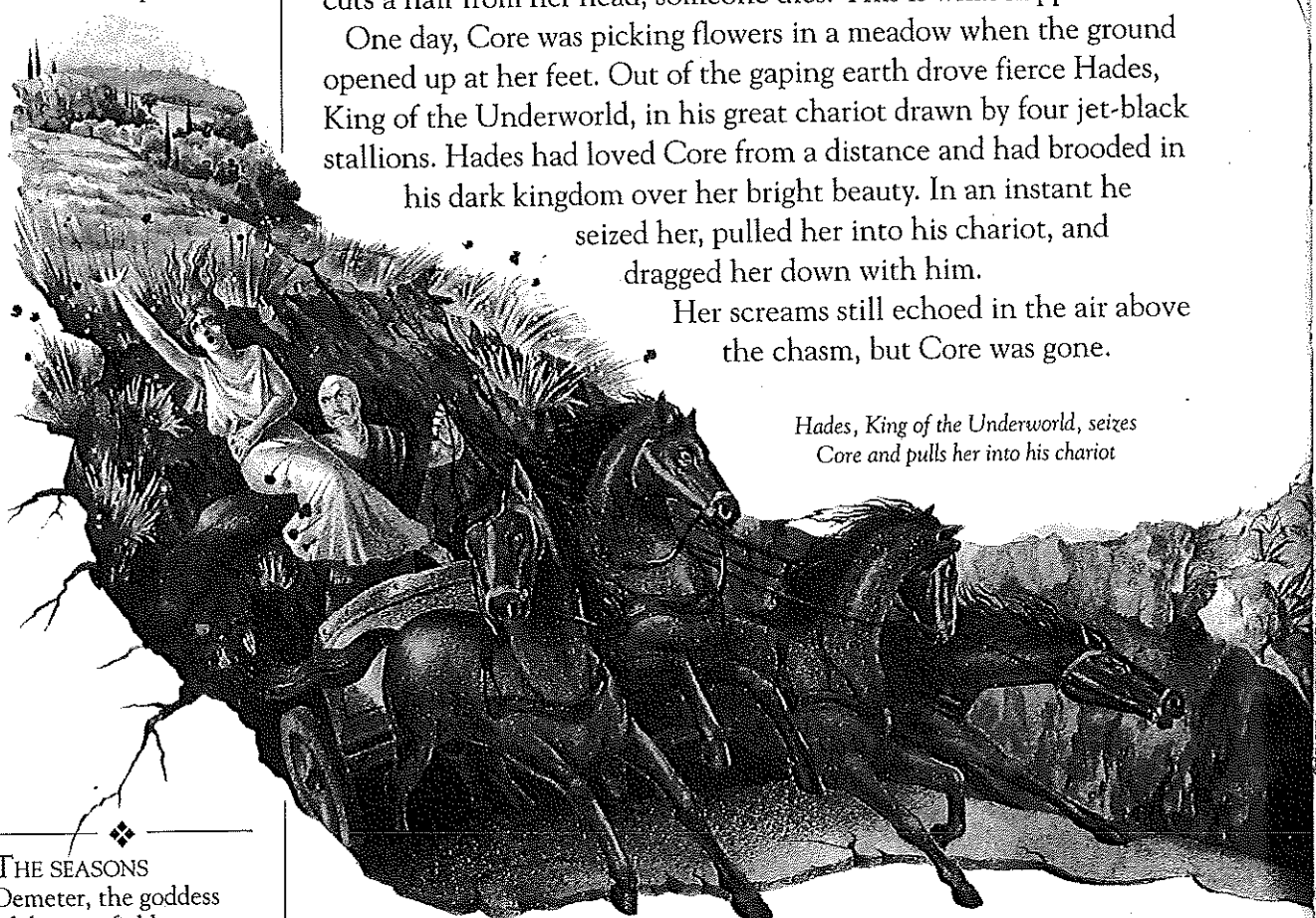






# PERSEPHONE

*Core scatters her  
flowers in terror as  
the earth opens*



*Hades, King of the Underworld, seizes  
Core and pulls her into his chariot*

*Hades's chariot disappears into the  
depths of the dark Underworld*

## THE SEASONS

Demeter, the goddess of the cornfield, was responsible for the harvest of all crops, flowers, and plants. When she lost her daughter, she forbade anything to grow on the earth. Winter fell when Persephone was in the Underworld; when she came back to earth, it was summer again.

**P**ERSEPHONE IS THE daughter of Demeter, goddess of the cornfield. As a young girl she was known as Core, the maiden, but now she is called Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, and each time she cuts a hair from her head, someone dies. This is what happened.

One day, Core was picking flowers in a meadow when the ground opened up at her feet. Out of the gaping earth drove fierce Hades, King of the Underworld, in his great chariot drawn by four jet-black stallions. Hades had loved Core from a distance and had brooded in his dark kingdom over her bright beauty. In an instant he seized her, pulled her into his chariot, and dragged her down with him.

Her screams still echoed in the air above the chasm, but Core was gone.

Demeter, her mother, heard her cries. Dressing herself in mourning, she lit two torches at fiery Mount Etna and, with one in each hand, wandered the world for nine days and nights, neither eating nor drinking, calling for her daughter. But no answer came.

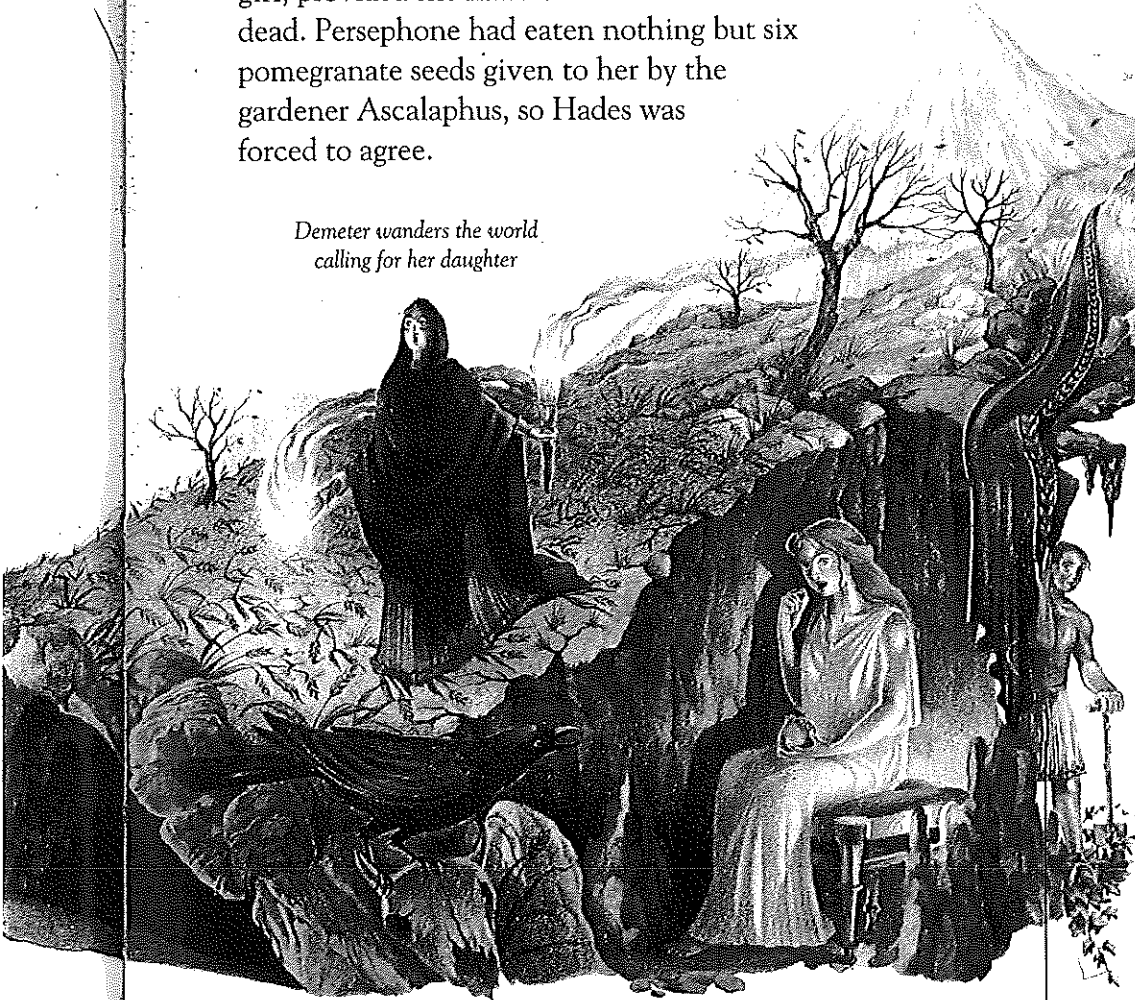
At last Demeter came to Helios, the sun, who had seen everything. "It is no use calling," he said. "Your daughter, Core, is now the bride of Hades. She is no longer a maid; her new name is Persephone."



Demeter had been the gentlest of all gods and goddesses, but at this news she let out a terrible cry. She turned her anger on the world, and forbade the flowers to bloom or the crops to grow. Soon the earth became a wasteland. The gods begged Demeter to relent, but she would not. At last Zeus ordered Hades to give up the girl, provided she had not eaten the food of the dead. Persephone had eaten nothing but six pomegranate seeds given to her by the gardener Ascalaphus, so Hades was forced to agree.

*Demeter wanders the world  
calling for her daughter*

*As Demeter  
greeted her long-lost  
daughter, winter fades  
and the world becomes  
green again*

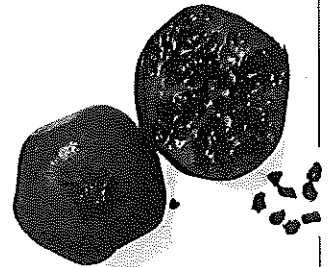


*In her underground prison,  
Persephone eats six pomegranate seeds*

*Ascalaphus*

When Persephone reached the upper world, she ran to embrace her mother. Demeter's anger melted, and the world became green again.

Zeus told Persephone that each year she must spend six months in the Underworld, as the bride of Hades, one winter month for each seed that she had eaten. But for the other six months, of spring and summer, she could return to the living world to be with her mother.



**POMEGRANATE SEEDS**  
Persephone could not leave the Underworld forever because she had eaten the pomegranate seeds from Hades's garden. Some say it was Hades's gardener, Ascalaphus, who saw Persephone eat the seeds. The pomegranate is a thick-skinned fruit with seeds floating in a juicy pulp. The tree grows in Mediterranean countries, and in other parts of the world that have a hot, dry climate.



# CADMUS AND THE SOWN MEN



**ATHENA**  
The goddess Athena, depicted on this coin from the 5th century BC, was a warrior and favorite daughter of Zeus. She was known for her good sense and was associated with the owl, an ancient symbol of wisdom. Athena was also the patron goddess of Athens.

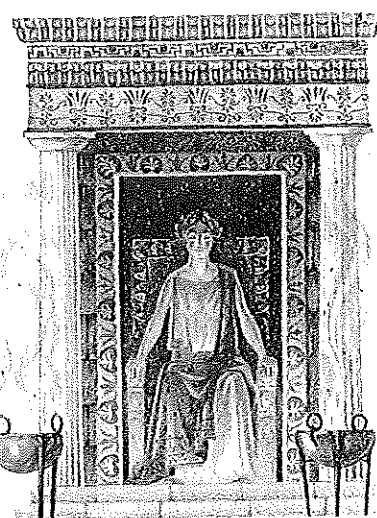


**WARRIOR**  
This detail from the "Warrior Vase" shows a Greek soldier carrying a shield and a spear. The vase, which comes from Mycenae, in southern Greece, can be dated to c.1200 BC.

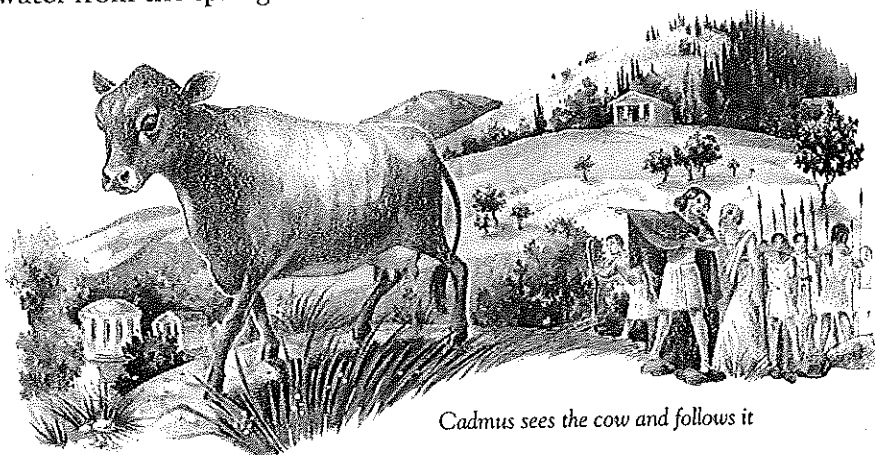
**C**ADMUS HAD A SISTER named Europa. She was carried off by Zeus, who was disguised as a bull, and became the mother of King Minos of Crete. When Europa disappeared, Cadmus went in search of her. For many months he scoured the lands around his home, but he could find no sign of his sister. At last he went to Delphi to consult the oracle, where the advice and prophecies of the god Apollo were revealed. Cadmus asked the oracle what he should do.

"Your sister is safe. Search for her no more," said the oracle. "Your destiny lies elsewhere. When you leave here, you will see a cow. Follow it, and when it falls to the ground, exhausted, there you must build a great city."

Outside Delphi, Cadmus saw a cow, just as the oracle had promised. With a group of men he followed it for many miles until at last it sank to the ground. "Here we will found our city, and call it Thebes," said Cadmus. "But first, we must sacrifice this cow to thank the gods for their guidance. Go and fetch some water from the spring to honor them."



*The oracle of Apollo tells Cadmus that a cow will show him where to build a new city.*



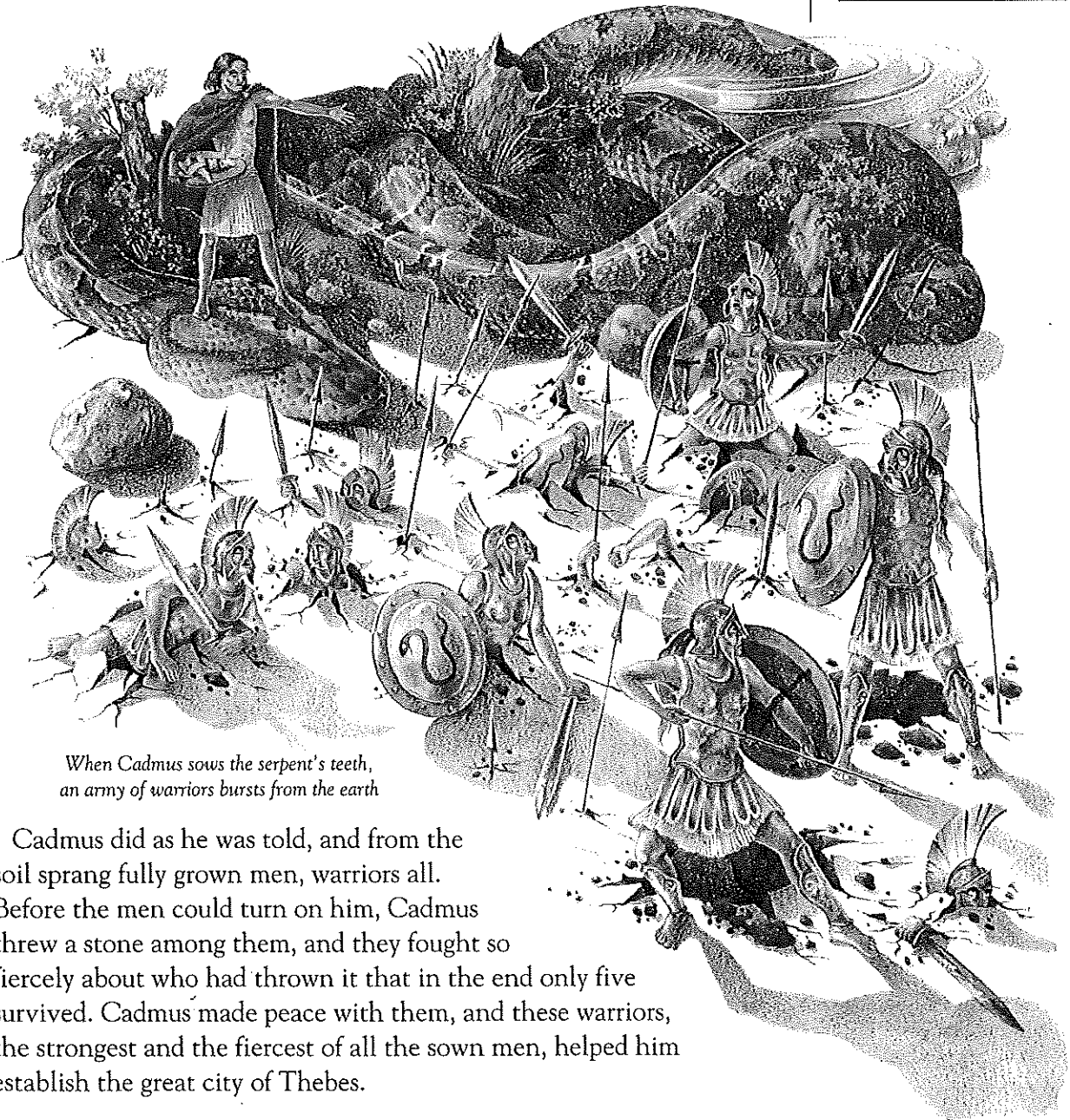
*Cadmus sees the cow and follows it*



When his men took water from the nearby spring, they disturbed a terrible serpent. It killed them all with its fearsome, snapping jaws. In fury, Cadmus slew the serpent with a blow from a huge rock.

Grieving for the loss of his men, Cadmus went ahead and sacrificed the cow. The goddess Athena appeared and told him not to worry. "I will supply you with better men than any king can command. Just take the serpent's teeth and sow them in the soil!"

♦  
THE FIRST THEBANS  
The "sown men" were known as the *spartoi*, from the Greek "to sow." The five who survived were the first inhabitants of the city of Thebes, of which Cadmus was king.



*When Cadmus sows the serpent's teeth,  
an army of warriors bursts from the earth*

Cadmus did as he was told, and from the soil sprang fully grown men, warriors all. Before the men could turn on him, Cadmus threw a stone among them, and they fought so fiercely about who had thrown it that in the end only five survived. Cadmus made peace with them, and these warriors, the strongest and the fiercest of all the sown men, helped him establish the great city of Thebes.

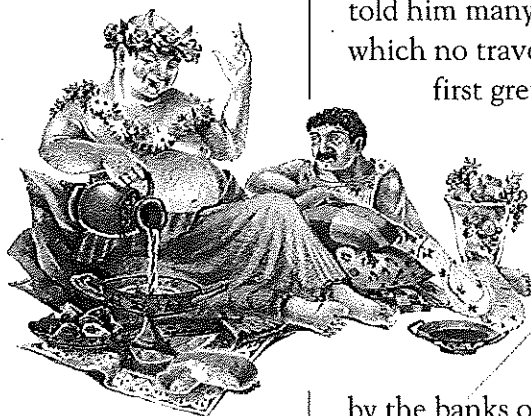




# THE GOLDEN TOUCH

## SATYRS

The satyrs were woodland gods; often the lower parts of their bodies resembled horses or goats. Silenus was older but, like the other satyrs, was a companion of Dionysus.



*The fat satyr Silenus tells Midas some strange tales as he drinks his wine*



## GOLDEN TREASURE

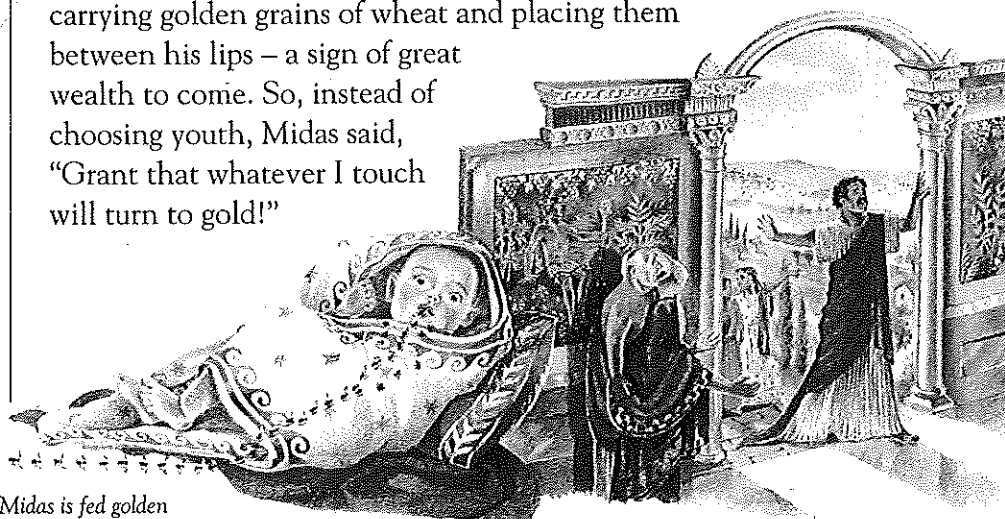
This jug with coins, dating from 650-625 BC, was found in Ephesus, Turkey. The coins are made of electrum, an alloy of gold and silver used in ancient times.

THE GIFTS OF THE GODS are not always what they seem. Take warning from the tale of King Midas, who thought himself wise. Midas had been tutored in the mysteries of the god of wine, Dionysus, by the poet Orpheus. So when one day some peasants brought before him an old, drunken satyr, bound with chains of flowers, Midas recognized him as Silenus, a companion of Dionysus.

Midas feasted Silenus for ten days and nights, and, in return, Silenus told him many strange things. He told of a terrible whirlpool beyond which no traveler could pass. Beside it, two streams flowed. By the first grew a tree whose fruit caused those who ate it to waste away. By the second grew a tree whose fruit made men young again. One bite took an old man back to middle age; two bites and he was a young man again; in three bites he was back in adolescence; in four, a child; in five, a baby. A sixth bite, and he would disappear altogether.

At length, Midas took Silenus back to Dionysus, by the banks of the Pactolus River. The god had been missing his companion, and by way of gratitude for Silenus's safe return, he offered to grant Midas any wish he might ask for.

Midas first thought of Silenus's tale, but then he remembered a story that when he was a baby, some ants had been seen carrying golden grains of wheat and placing them between his lips – a sign of great wealth to come. So, instead of choosing youth, Midas said, "Grant that whatever I touch will turn to gold!"



*As a baby, Midas is fed golden grains of wheat by ants*



The god granted Midas's wish, and the king went away, delighted with his good fortune. He broke a twig from a low-growing branch of oak, and it turned to gold. He touched a stone and a clod of earth, and they, too, turned to gold. He gathered an ear of corn, and it turned to glittering metal in his hand. He picked an apple, and it became as golden as the fabled apples of the Hesperides.

He touched the pillars of his palace doorway, and they turned to gold. Even the water in which he washed splashed golden over his hands. He called for food and wine. But when he reached for a piece of bread, it, too, turned to gold; when he bit into some meat, it turned to metal where his teeth touched it. Even the wine, Dionysus's discovery and gift to men, turned to liquid gold as it passed his lips.

Midas could neither eat nor drink, and soon he was in a torment of hunger and thirst. Gold, which had once been his heart's desire, was now hateful to him. He begged Dionysus to free him of his gift.

Dionysus took pity on the wretched man and told him, "To cancel the gift, you must go to the source of the Pactolus River. Bathe in the spring there, and wash away your greed."

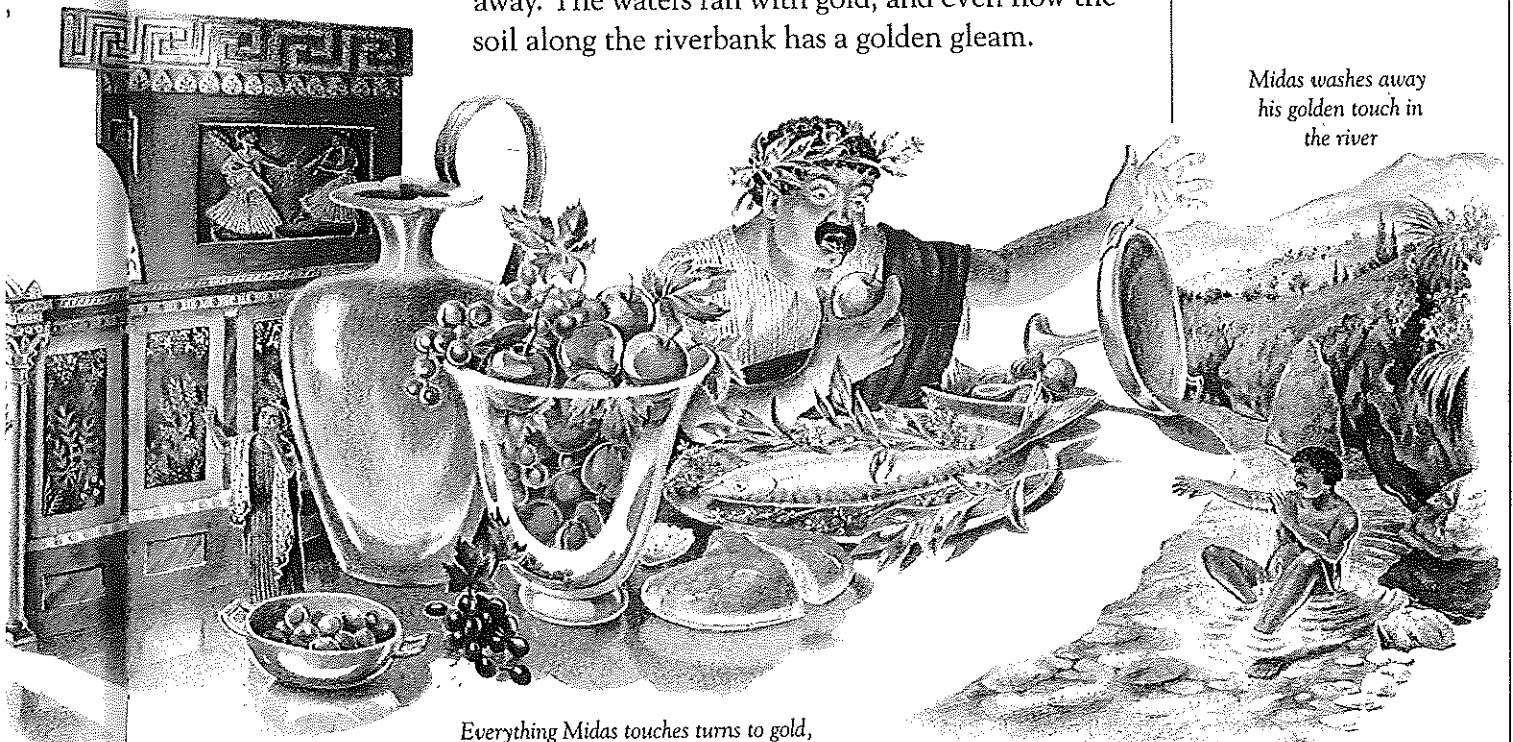
Midas did as he was told and, as he bathed, his golden touch washed away. The waters ran with gold, and even now the soil along the riverbank has a golden gleam.



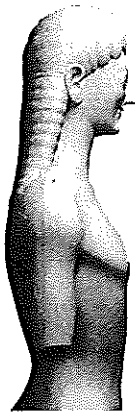
#### WINE VESSELS

In ancient Greece wine was a popular drink. It was believed to be the gift of the god Dionysus to mankind. Wine was often diluted, and the larger of these two bronze wine vessels would have held water for this purpose. The mixture was poured into a jug and the ladle used to fill the cups.

*Midas washes away  
his golden touch in  
the river*



*Everything Midas touches turns to gold,  
including his food and wine*



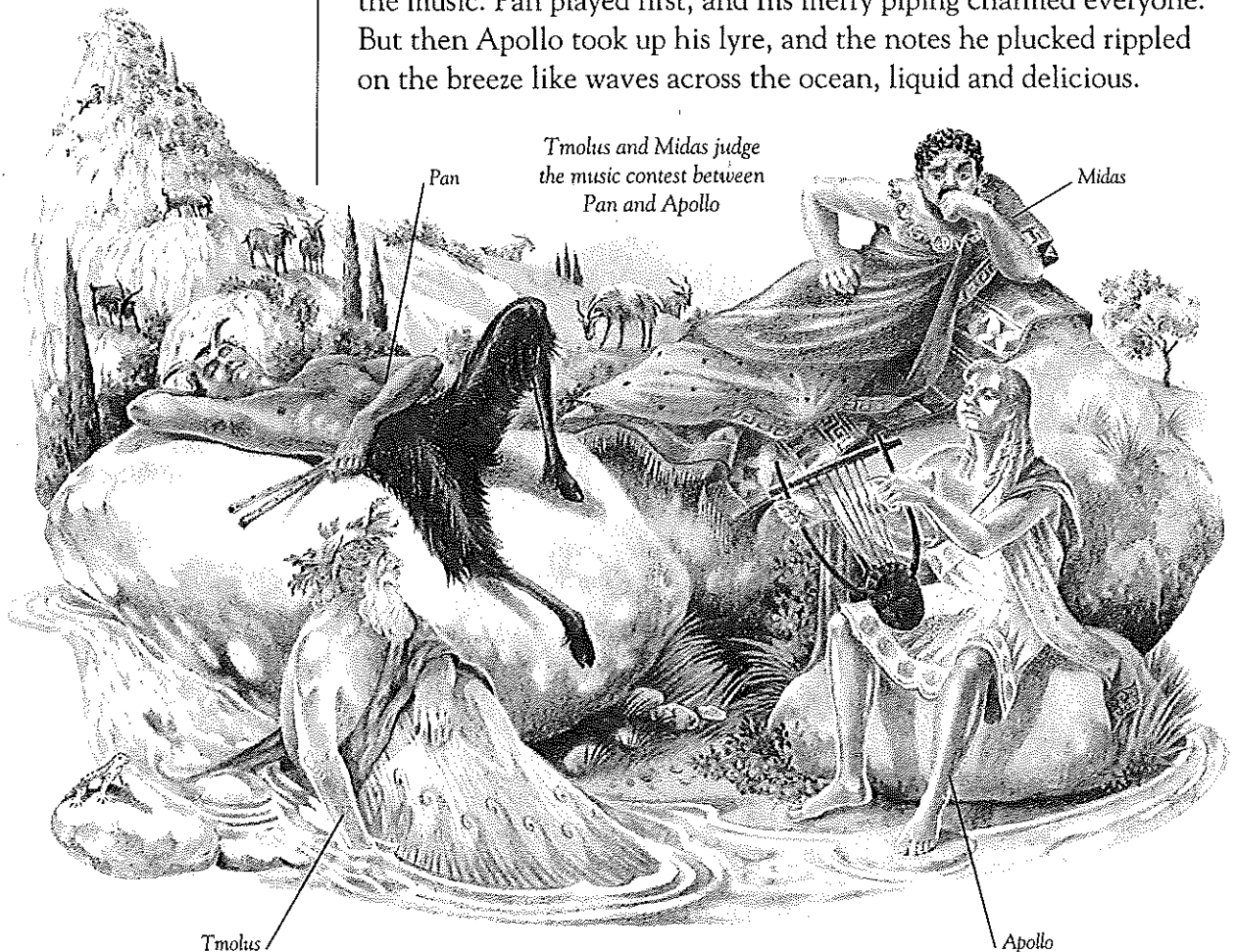
**APOLLO**  
This statue of Apollo, with a smile on his face, dates from 575-550 BC. Apollo, who was the god of music and light, had beautiful long, curling hair.

# KING MIDAS'S EARS

**T**HERE IS ANOTHER STORY of Midas, which shows that although he freed himself from the desire for gold, he did not rid himself of foolishness. For he became a worshiper of Pan, the god of pastures and wild places, and, by taking Pan's side, he offended great Apollo.

Now Pan enjoys playing simple country tunes on his wooden pipes, and because everyone had always liked what he played, he began to boast that he was a better musician even than Apollo, the god of music. He went so far as to challenge Apollo to a contest, to be judged by the river god, Tmolus.

Tmolus dressed himself as a judge, with an oak wreath in his hair and bunches of acorns hanging by his brow, and sat down to listen to the music. Pan played first, and his merry piping charmed everyone. But then Apollo took up his lyre, and the notes he plucked rippled on the breeze like waves across the ocean, liquid and delicious.





Midas is horrified  
to find that he has  
ass' ears



Tmolus had no hesitation in awarding the prize to Apollo, but Midas objected. "I preferred Pan's playing," he said.

"You can't have heard properly," said Tmolus.

"There's nothing wrong with my ears," said Midas.

At that, Apollo's anger overflowed. "You are not fit to have human ears," he said, "if that is the use you make of them." And he gave Midas, instead, a pair of ass' ears: long, gray, and hairy. "Now you look like the donkey you are," he said.

King Midas was ashamed of his new ears, and he tried to hide them from the world by wrapping them up in a turban. But his barber eventually discovered his embarrassing secret.

The barber did not dare tell anyone about the king's strange deformity, but he could not keep such an extraordinary thing to himself. So he went out into the country, dug a hole, and whispered the secret into the ground. Then he buried it underneath the earth.

But all secrets will come out. A clump of reeds grew where the barber had dug his hole, and as the wind whistled through them, they seemed to sigh, "King Midas has ass' ears! King Midas has ass' ears!"

When he learned that his secret was common knowledge, Midas died of shame.



#### DONKEY CUP

The painted pottery of ancient Greece often features figures and scenes from Greek mythology. Less common are the cups and jugs shaped as animals. This unusual two-handled drinking cup has a donkey's head as a spout for pouring.

#### THE PAN PIPES

King Midas is said to have invented the pipes that Pan played in the music contest. This is perhaps why he preferred Pan's playing to Apollo's.



Everyone hears the reeds whisper, "King Midas has ass' ears"





# THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR



**MOUNTAINOUS CRETE**  
The Greek island of Crete is a place of contrasts with snowcapped mountains suffounding fertile valleys. Between 2500 and 1100 BC, Crete was occupied by the Minoans, named after the legendary King Minos.

**G**REAT ZEUS HAS many human lovers, whom he attracts using different disguises. Many of these lovers have borne him children upon whose fates the whole world has turned. One such lover was Europa, whom Zeus saw walking by the shore. He disguised himself as a snow-white bull and approached her. Amazed at seeing a bull at once so fine and so tame, Europa petted him and hung flowers from his horns. Then, suddenly bold, she jumped onto his back and let him carry her down to the sea.

Once in the water, Zeus swam away with Europa across the ocean to the island of Crete, where, disguised as an eagle, he lay with her. She bore him three sons: Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon.

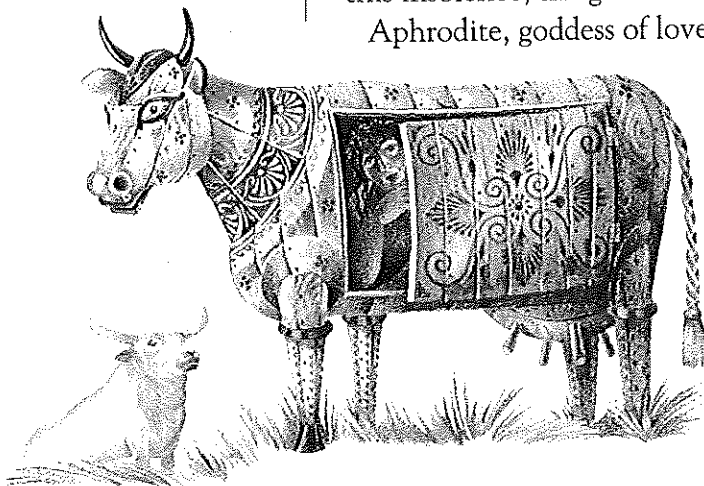
After Zeus left her, Europa married Asterius, the king of Crete, who raised her sons as his own, making Minos his heir. In due course Minos became king, and he took a lovely maiden, Pasiphae, for his wife. In his pride and glory, Minos boasted that the gods would grant his every request. To prove it, he built an altar on the seashore to Poseidon, the sea god, and prayed that a bull should come to him out of the sea. Minos promised he would sacrifice the bull to the gods.

Immediately, a white bull emerged from the waves. But it was such a fine beast that Minos could not bear to sacrifice it; instead, he killed a bull from his own herd, and kept the gift of the gods for himself. For this insolence, the gods took a terrible revenge.

Aphrodite, goddess of love, made Minos's wife, Pasiphae, fall in love

with the bull. Horrified, but unable to resist Aphrodite's power, Pasiphae confided her secret to Daedalus, a great craftsman who served King Minos and his court at Knossos.

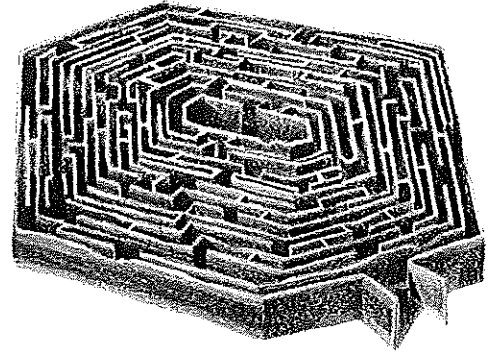
So Daedalus built a hollow, wooden cow for Pasiphae to crouch inside. From there, unseen, she was able to spend time with the bull, her beloved. But as further punishment, the gods caused Pasiphae to give birth to a monster, half man, half bull, that was named the Minotaur.



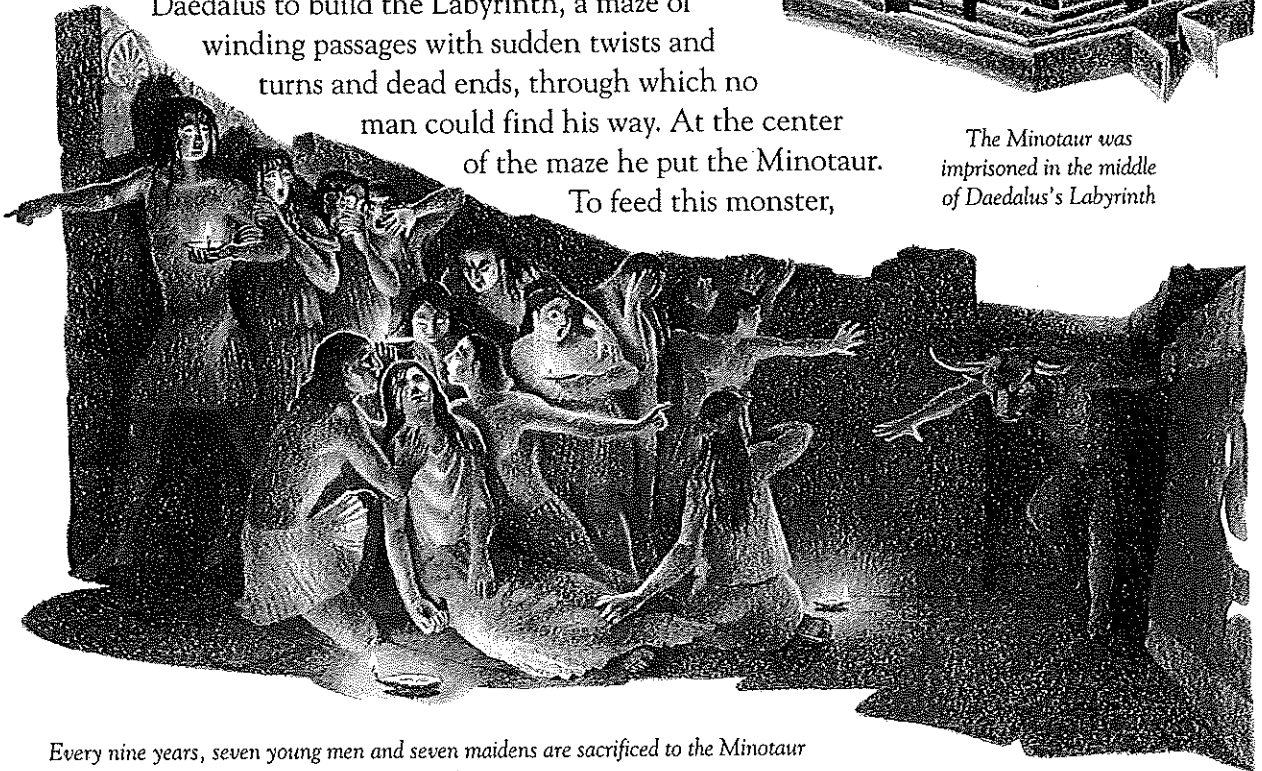
*Pasiphae crouches inside the wooden cow that Daedalus has made for her and waits for the white bull to approach*

Minos was filled with horror at what had happened to Pasiphae and sought advice from an oracle. "Conceal your shame in cunning," he was told. So Minos asked

Daedalus to build the Labyrinth, a maze of winding passages with sudden twists and turns and dead ends, through which no man could find his way. At the center of the maze he put the Minotaur. To feed this monster,



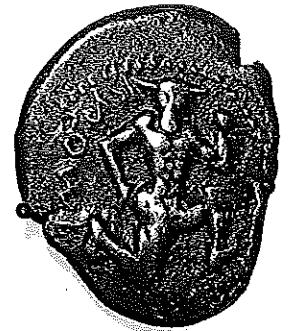
The Minotaur was imprisoned in the middle of Daedalus's Labyrinth



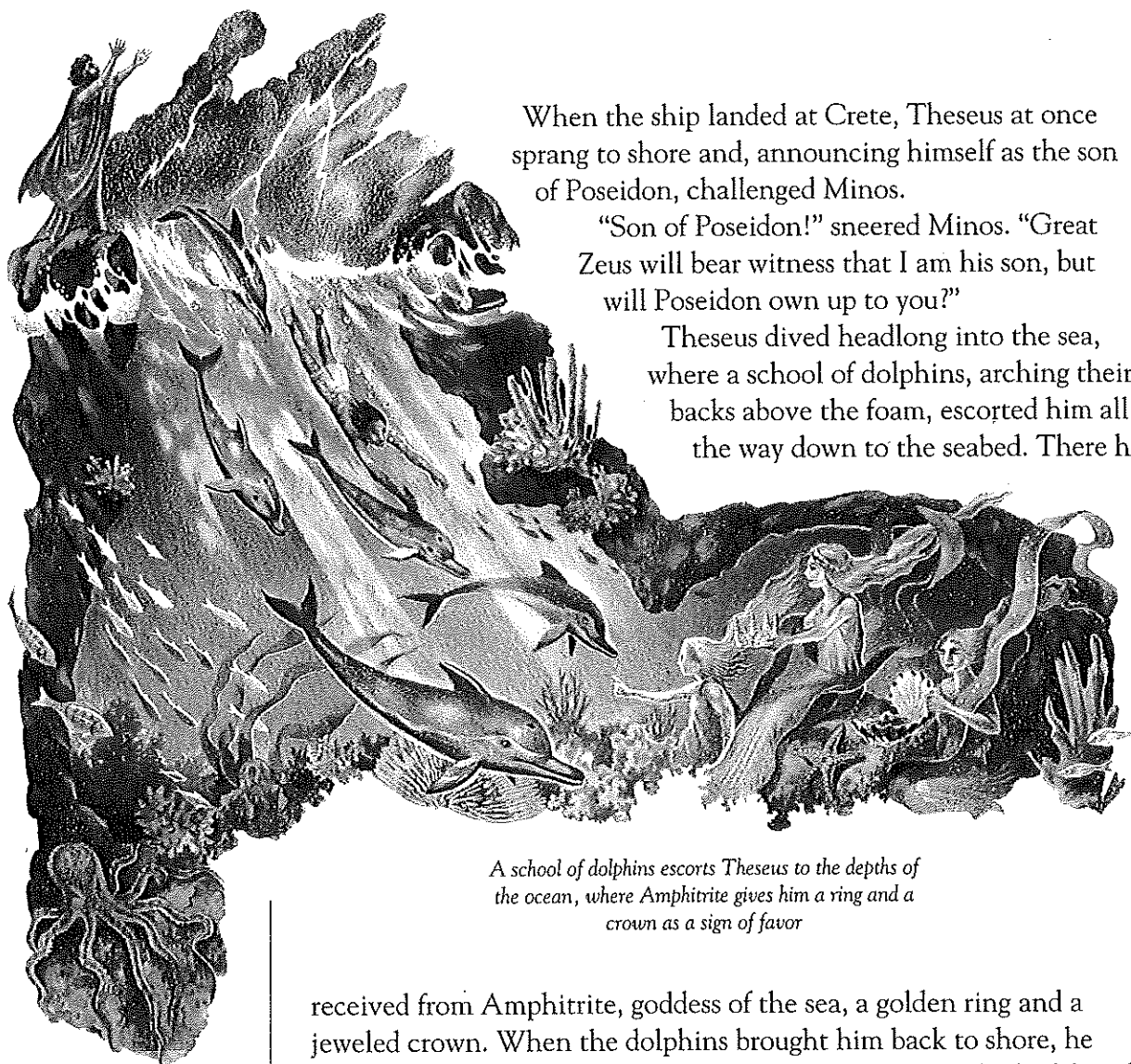
Every nine years, seven young men and seven maidens are sacrificed to the Minotaur

King Minos demanded seven young men and seven maidens from the city of Athens every nine years. They were sent by ship to Crete and then into the maze, where the Minotaur gluttled himself on their flesh.

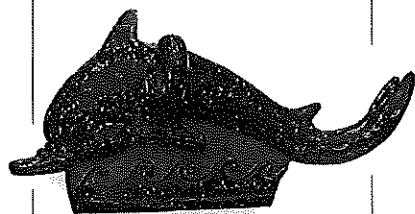
Twice Athens had paid this deadly tribute, owed by the king, Aegeus, because some years before he had had an accidental hand in the death of one of Minos's sons. The third time was now due. But on this occasion a young hero stepped forward, offering himself as one of the youths and promising to kill the Minotaur or be killed by it. His name was Theseus, the adopted son of King Aegeus, whose real father was Poseidon. Theseus had already proven himself resourceful and brave, and Aegeus had to let him go. He told Theseus, "Before, the ships I sent to Crete bore black sails, in mourning for the young people who were to be killed by the Minotaur. This time, the ship will also carry white sails, in token of our hope. If you slay the beast, be sure to hoist the white sails on your return, so we will know that you have been successful, and can rejoice." With that, the ship set sail.



**MINOTAUR COIN**  
This c. 400 BC coin was found at Knossos, in Crete. The palace of Knossos, with its many winding corridors, may have inspired the myth of the Labyrinth.



*A school of dolphins escorts Theseus to the depths of the ocean, where Amphitrite gives him a ring and a crown as a sign of favor*



**DOLPHIN OIL CONTAINER**  
The ancient Greeks attributed special power to dolphins, which often appear in their art. This dolphin pitcher would have held cooking oil.

When the ship landed at Crete, Theseus at once sprang to shore and, announcing himself as the son of Poseidon, challenged Minos.

"Son of Poseidon!" sneered Minos. "Great Zeus will bear witness that I am his son, but will Poseidon own up to you?"

Theseus dived headlong into the sea, where a school of dolphins, arching their backs above the foam, escorted him all the way down to the seabed. There he

received from Amphitrite, goddess of the sea, a golden ring and a jeweled crown. When the dolphins brought him back to shore, he held up the precious gifts, so that all could see the favor he had found with the gods.

"Now, King Minos," he declared, "I have come to free the Minotaur from the misshapen body in which it has been trapped by the malice of the gods and the foolishness of mankind. If you are anything of a man, you will allow me to enter the Labyrinth and kill the creature with my bare hands. If I succeed, Athens will owe you no more tribute. If I fail, let the Minotaur drink my blood."

"Very well," said King Minos. "You may try, son of Poseidon."

The next day, King Minos's daughter, Ariadne, who had fallen in love with the noble Theseus, approached him, saying, "If you will take me back to Athens and make me your bride, I will show you the key to the maze, given to me by Daedalus, its architect."



Theseus readily agreed, and Ariadne handed him a ball of thread. "Tie one end of this thread outside the entrance of the maze," she said. "Then let the ball roll where it will. Follow it, and it will lead you to the center, where you will find the foul lair of my half-brother, the Minotaur. Go at night, when he is asleep, and you may throttle him where he lies. Afterward, simply roll the ball back up again, and it will lead you safely out."

That night, Theseus did as Ariadne instructed. As he plunged into the dark warren of the maze, the thread seemed to glimmer and guide his footsteps toward his prey.

As Theseus laid hands on the sleeping beast, it awoke and, with a roar, seized him in its death embrace. But Theseus was the stronger, and as they wrestled, he broke the creature's back and killed it.

When Theseus staggered out of the maze, his face a mask of white and his body spotted with blood, Ariadne was there to meet him. They boarded their ship, with the other Athenian youths, and fled before King Minos could learn what had happened.

But Theseus was not true to Ariadne. She had helped him out of love, and he had accepted her help knowing he did not truly want to marry her. When, a few days later, they landed on the island of Naxos, Theseus left Ariadne sleeping on the shore and set sail without her.

So taken up was Theseus with his desertion of Ariadne that he forgot all about the promise he had made to his father. And so, when his ship came within sight of Athens, it bore still the black sails of mourning, not the white sails of victory. King Aegeus, who loved Theseus more than life, cast himself into the sea, which ever since his death has been called the Aegean.

Thus the heroism of Theseus was tainted by treachery, and his joyful homecoming darkened by grief.

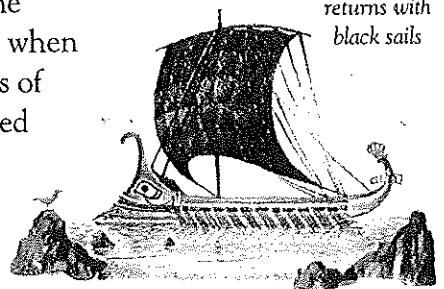


*Ariadne waits anxiously at the door as Theseus wrestles with the Minotaur*

#### THESEUS

Aegeus's adopted son, Theseus, was one of the greatest Greek heroes. After the killing of the Minotaur and Aegeus's tragic death, he became King of Athens. He later lived the life of a wandering adventurer.

*Theseus's ship returns with black sails*







# THE FALL OF ICARUS



## GREEK POTTERY

Most towns in ancient Greece had an area where potters made and sold pots. The wine cup above, made c. 490 BC, shows a potter at his wheel, adding a handle to a cup. The cup painter was usually a different person from the potter. Painted scenes such as these tell us about the everyday life and mythology of ancient Greece.



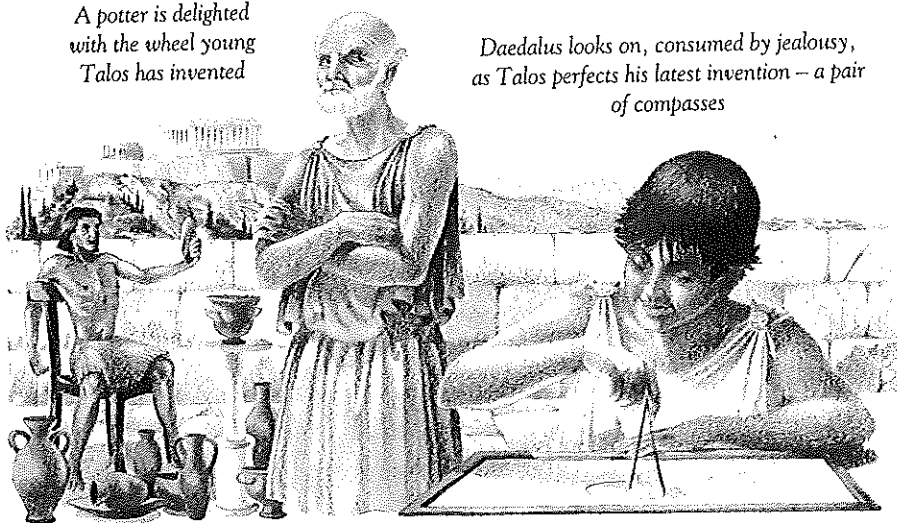
**MASTER CRAFTSMAN**  
Daedalus, the father of Icarus, was well known in Athens for his skill as an artist and craftsman. When jealousy caused him to murder his nephew, Talos, he took refuge with King Minos on the island of Crete. There he became the architect of the Labyrinth, the maze that housed the monstrous Minotaur.

**O**F ALL THE CRAFTSMEN and inventors of old, Daedalus was the best and most famous. Anyone who wanted any clever thing made came first to him, at his workshop in Athens.

Now Daedalus had a nephew, Talos, who was the son of his sister, Polycaste. He took on Talos as his apprentice, and the boy, although only twelve years old, rapidly showed signs of being even cleverer than his master! It was Talos who invented the first saw and the potter's wheel, and Talos who devised the first pair of compasses. Talos's reputation soon spread, and people began to bring their most difficult problems to the boy, not the man.

*A potter is delighted  
with the wheel young  
Talos has invented*

*Daedalus looks on, consumed by jealousy,  
as Talos perfects his latest invention — a pair  
of compasses*



Overcome with jealousy, Daedalus lured the boy to the top of the temple of Athena and then pushed him to his death. Talos's mother, Polycaste, killed herself out of grief, and Daedalus, along with his own son, Icarus — a vain boy with none of Talos's quickness — was banished from the city of Athens.

Daedalus and Icarus took refuge on the island of Crete, where Daedalus placed his skill and cleverness at the disposal of King Minos. But he suddenly fell out of favor with the king when Theseus killed the Minotaur and managed to escape from the supposedly escape-proof Labyrinth. Furious, King Minos had Daedalus and his son thrown into prison.

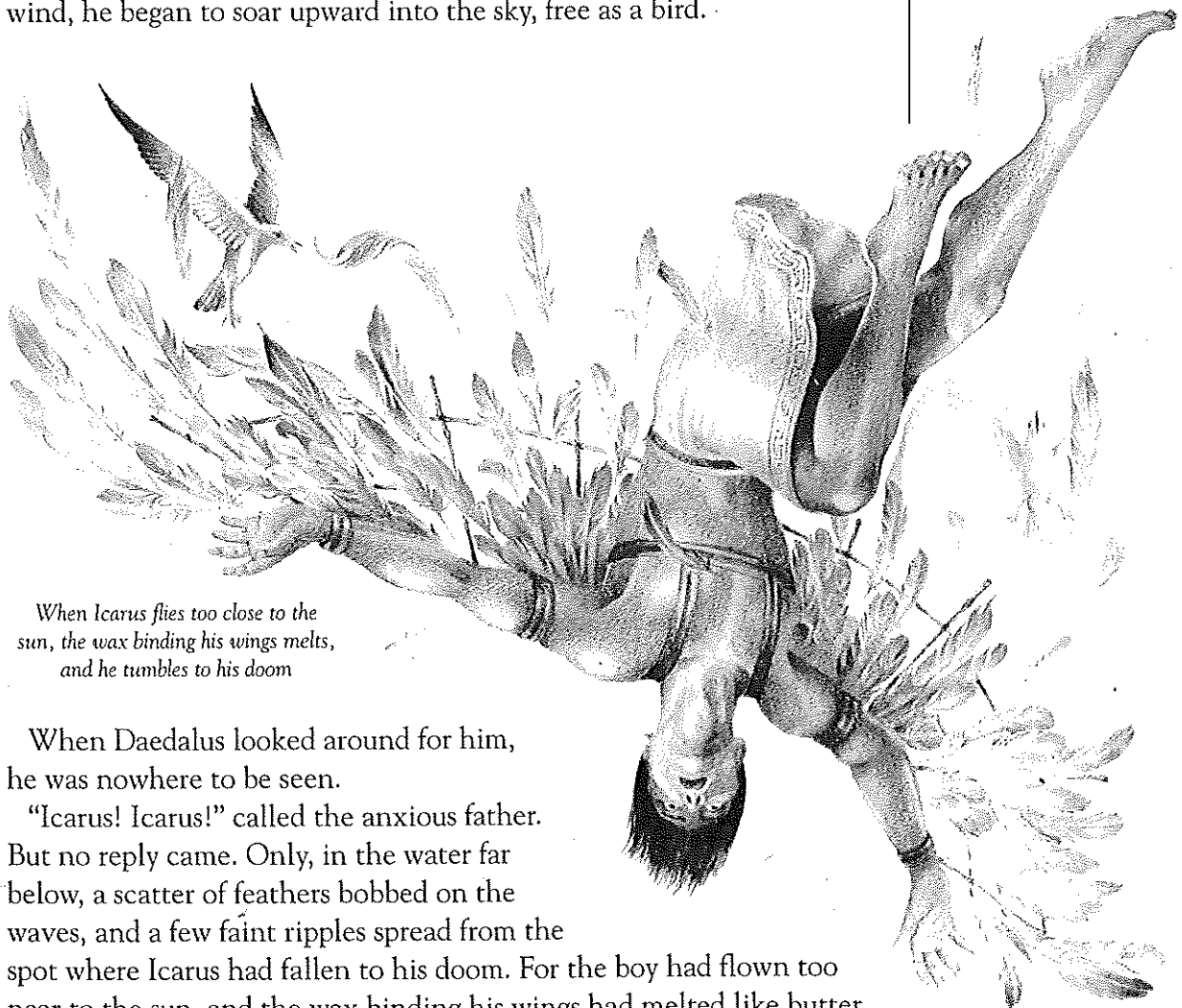
While Icarus spent his days preening himself and thinking idle thoughts, Daedalus sat in deep study, planning how to escape from Crete. It was too far to swim to the nearest land, and it was impossible to get away by boat owing to the vigilance of King Minos's navy.

At last Daedalus conceived a daring plan. He made two pairs of wings, threading feathers together and sealing them with wax. When the wings were ready, he took Icarus aside. "Put these on and follow me," he said, "but take care not to fly too near to the sun, or too near to the sea. Keep a middle course. With these wings, we shall escape."

The pair took flight from a high ledge and swooped toward the horizon. For many miles Icarus followed his father carefully, but at last, feeling young and carefree, and enjoying the buffeting of the wind, he began to soar upward into the sky, free as a bird.



**THE ISLAND OF SAMOS**  
It is said that when Icarus flew too close to the sun and melted his wings, he fell into the sea near the Greek island of Samos.



*When Icarus flies too close to the sun, the wax binding his wings melts, and he tumbles to his doom*

When Daedalus looked around for him, he was nowhere to be seen.

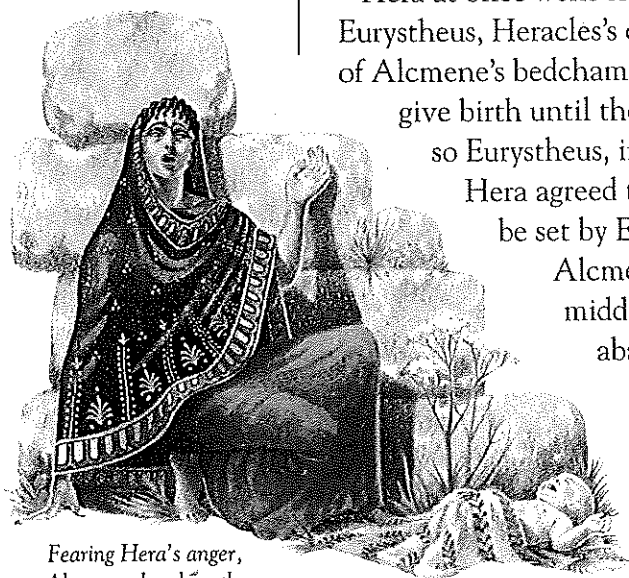
"Icarus! Icarus!" called the anxious father. But no reply came. Only, in the water far below, a scatter of feathers bobbed on the waves, and a few faint ripples spread from the spot where Icarus had fallen to his doom. For the boy had flown too near to the sun, and the wax binding his wings had melted like butter.



# THE LABORS OF HERACLES



**HERA**  
Zeus's wife, Hera, was the most powerful Greek goddess and the patron of wedded love. Her jealous nature led her to take revenge on many of Zeus's lovers.



Fearing Hera's anger, Alcmena abandons the baby Heracles outside the city walls

**Z**EUS, KING OF the gods, often infuriates his wife, the goddess Hera, with his many love affairs with mortal women. The children born of these love affairs are all half gods. But none have ever been greater than Heracles, for he was conceived to be the protector of both men and gods.

Zeus lay with Alcmena, Heracles's mother, in the guise of her husband, Amphytrion, who was away at a war. Zeus commanded time itself to slow down, so that one night was the length of three. When Amphytrion returned the following day, Alcmena was too tired to welcome him home; she was already carrying Zeus's child.

Nine months later, Zeus boasted in Olympus of the hero, his son, who was about to be born. "His name will be Heracles, and he will rule the noble House of Perseus."

Hera was furious, especially as the name Heracles means, "Glory of Hera." She went to Zeus and asked him, "Do you swear that the child to be born to the House of Perseus today will be the king of Mycenae?"

"I swear," said Zeus.

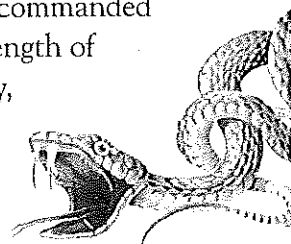
Hera at once went to Mycenae, and there she hastened the birth of Eurystheus, Heracles's cousin. Then she went and sat outside the door of Alcmena's bedchamber and bewitched her so that she could not give birth until the next day. Zeus could not go back on his word, so Eurystheus, instead of Heracles, became king. However, Hera agreed that if Heracles could perform twelve Labors, to be set by Eurystheus, he could become a god.

Alcmena was so frightened at finding herself in the middle of a quarrel between Zeus and Hera that she abandoned her baby outside Thebes, Mycenae's main city. Cleverly, Zeus asked the goddess Athena to take Hera past the spot.

"Look at this strong child," Athena exclaimed. "His mother must be mad to leave him. You're nursing, Hera. Give him a drink."

And so, by letting the baby drink from her breast, Hera was tricked into saving Heracles's life.

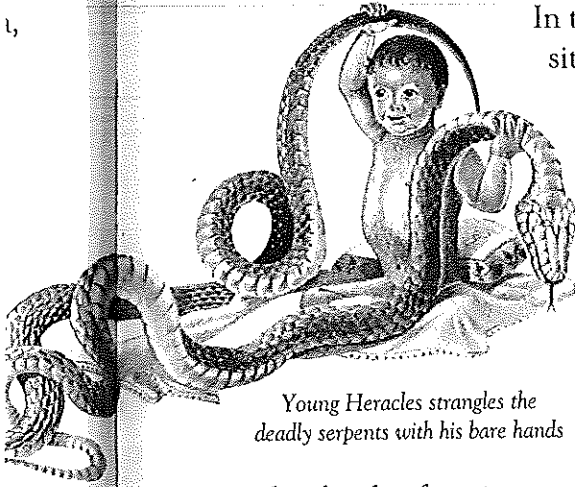
Athena returned the baby to Alcmena. "Guard him well," she said.





A year later, Hera tried again to foil the plans of Zeus. She sent two fearful serpents, with rippling blue scales and flame-filled eyes, to sink their poisoned fangs into the infant as he slept.

In the morning, Alcmene found Heracles sitting up, gurgling with pleasure, and dangling the dead serpents over the sides of his bed. He had strangled them with his bare hands.



*Young Heracles strangles the deadly serpents with his bare hands*

This was just one of the amazing feats performed by Heracles in childhood. He grew straight and tall, with fiery eyes and strength beyond his years. He liked to roam under the stars, and learned to think as well as to fight. He was an expert with both bow and

javelin, but his favorite weapon was a club cut from a wild olive tree.

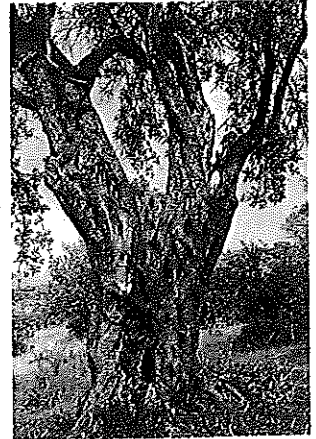
At last the time came for Heracles to undertake the twelve Labors that would make him a god. The first task set by Eurystheus was intended to be the last, for he asked his cousin to kill the Nemean lion, a fearsome beast whose thick hide was proof against any weapon.

When Heracles arrived in Nemea, he could not find anyone to tell him where the lion was, for it had devoured everyone in its path. So he hunted it across the country and tracked it to its lair. There he waited until the lion returned from hunting, its mane flecked with the blood of its victims.

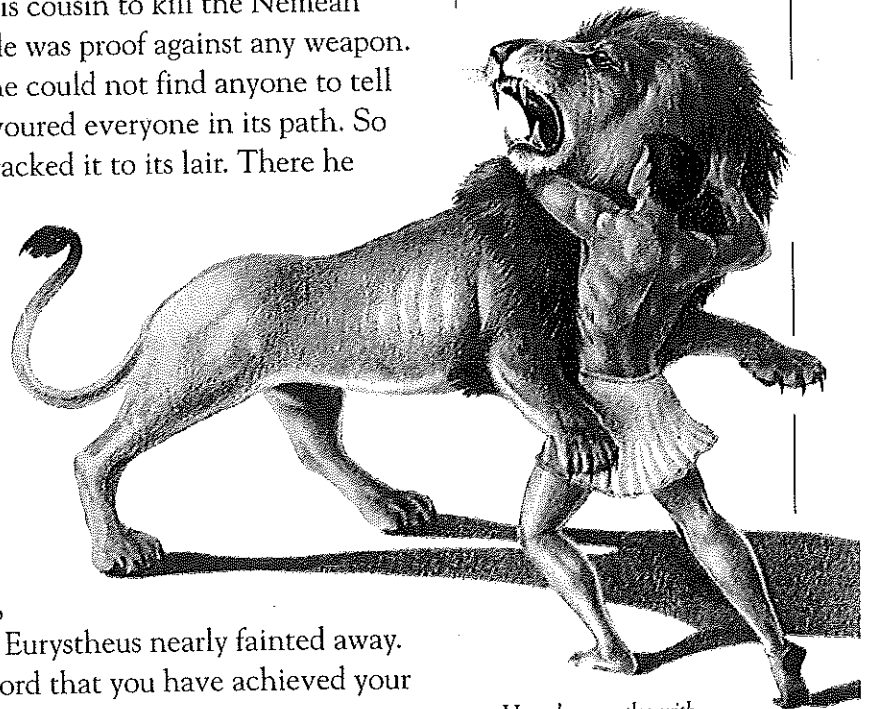
Heracles shot at the lion with his bow, but his arrows just bounced off. He swung at it with his sword, but the weapon rebounded in his hands. So he followed the creature into its cave and there he seized it in his arms and throttled it to death.

When Heracles returned to Thebes, wearing the lion's pelt as armor, King Eurystheus nearly fainted away. "Next time," he said, "just send me word that you have achieved your task. There is no need to come in person."

Eurystheus was terrified that what his cousin could do to the Nemean lion, he might also do to a Theban king.



**OLIVE TREE, CORFU**  
Heracles (known to the Romans as Hercules) cut his favorite wooden club from the olive tree. This evergreen, highly prized in ancient times, grows well in Mediterranean countries.



*Heracles wrestles with the Nemean lion, slowly throttling it to death*



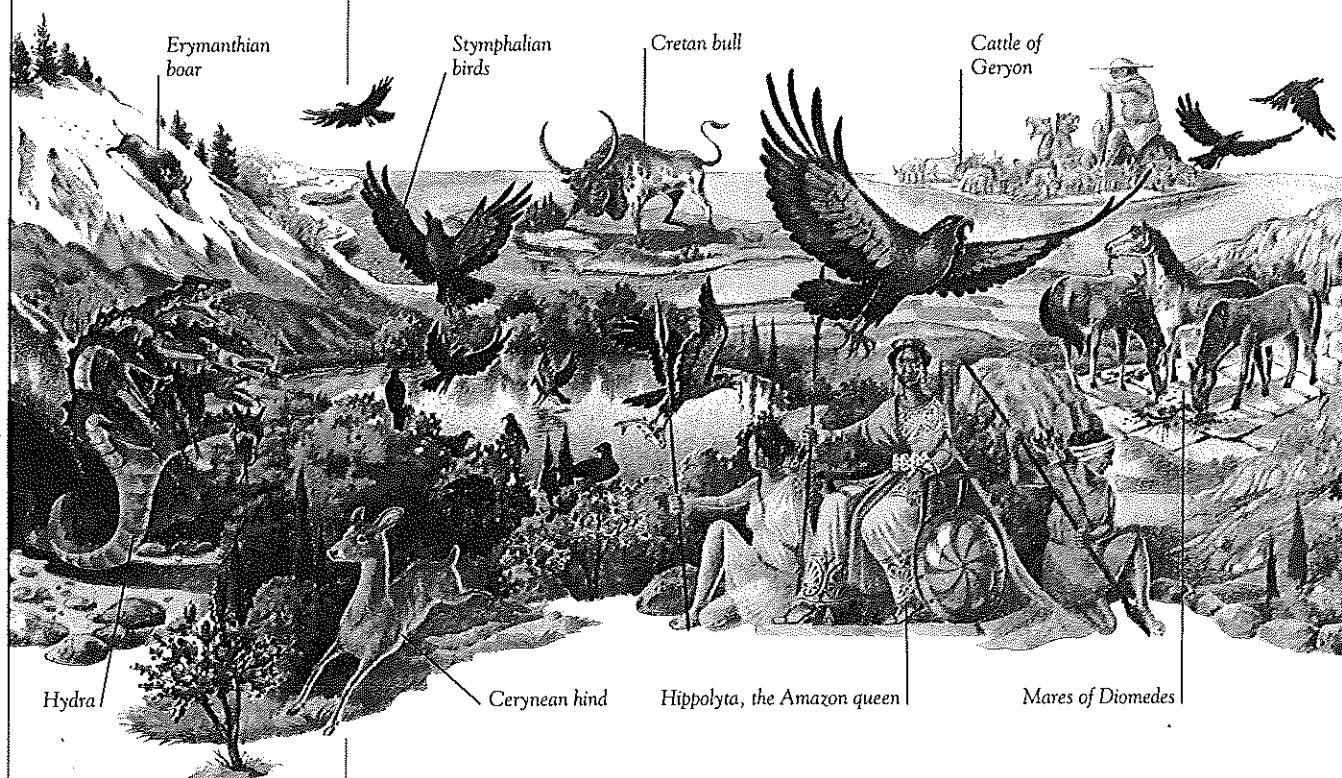


♦  
DEMIGODS

Many heroes of Greek mythology, such as Heracles, Perseus, Theseus, and Achilles, were demigods, meaning that they were half god, half mortal. Each one had extraordinary powers – in the case of Heracles, superhuman strength.

Several of the Labors of Heracles were similar in nature – he was sent to fight a monster and succeeded, by strength and guile, in killing or capturing it. His second task was to kill the many-headed Hydra, a creature so terrible that to smell its breath was fatal. Each time he cut off one of its heads, it grew more. But at last he killed it.

In this way, Heracles was sent against the Cerynean hind, the Erymanthian boar, the Stympthalian birds, the Cretan bull, the mares of Diomedes, and the cattle of Geryon. He was also sent to steal the golden girdle of the Amazon queen Hippolyta, which Eurystheus wanted to give to his daughter, Admete.



♦  
AMAZON QUEEN

The Amazons were a race of warrior women who lived in their own kingdom, without men. Hippolyta, their queen, wore a magic girdle, or belt, which Heracles was sent to steal.

All these tasks Heracles achieved. But the three that remained were of a different nature.

"It is clear that he can hunt and fight," said Eurystheus. "But let's see how he likes hard work."

Heracles was sent to clean the stables of King Augeus, and Eurystheus and his courtiers burst with laughter at the thought, for the Augean stables had not been cleaned in living history. The dung of the cattle and horses lay in such great mounds that the buildings were pretty well covered in manure.



"He won't be able to look down his nose at me after a year or two of dung-carrying," joked Eurystheus, "even if he is the son of a god. He won't want to use his nose at all!"

But Heracles was not daunted. When he arrived at the stables, he told King Augeus, "I'll have it done by nightfall."

The first thing that Heracles did was make two breaches in the stable walls. Then he diverted two nearby rivers so that they ran through the stables. Within a day they had swept the stables, and the

♦  
LEGENDARY LINES

Today, a very hard task may be described as "Herculean" after the Labors of Heracles, and writers may mention the Augean Stables when describing a filthy place.

*The Garden of the Hesperides*

*Heracles wears the pelt of the Nemean lion as armor*

*Stables of King Augeus*

fields and valleys, clean again. And so Heracles removed the mountains of dung without soiling his hands at all.

The eleventh Labor was more tricky. Heracles was sent to fetch some golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides, which can be found in the far west where the sun sets, on the slopes of Mount Atlas. The apples grew on a tree that was a wedding present to the goddess Hera from Gaia, mother of the earth. It was tended by three maidens, the Hesperides. In addition, a fierce serpent was coiled around the tree, guarding the precious fruit from thieves.

♦  
THE GOLDEN APPLES

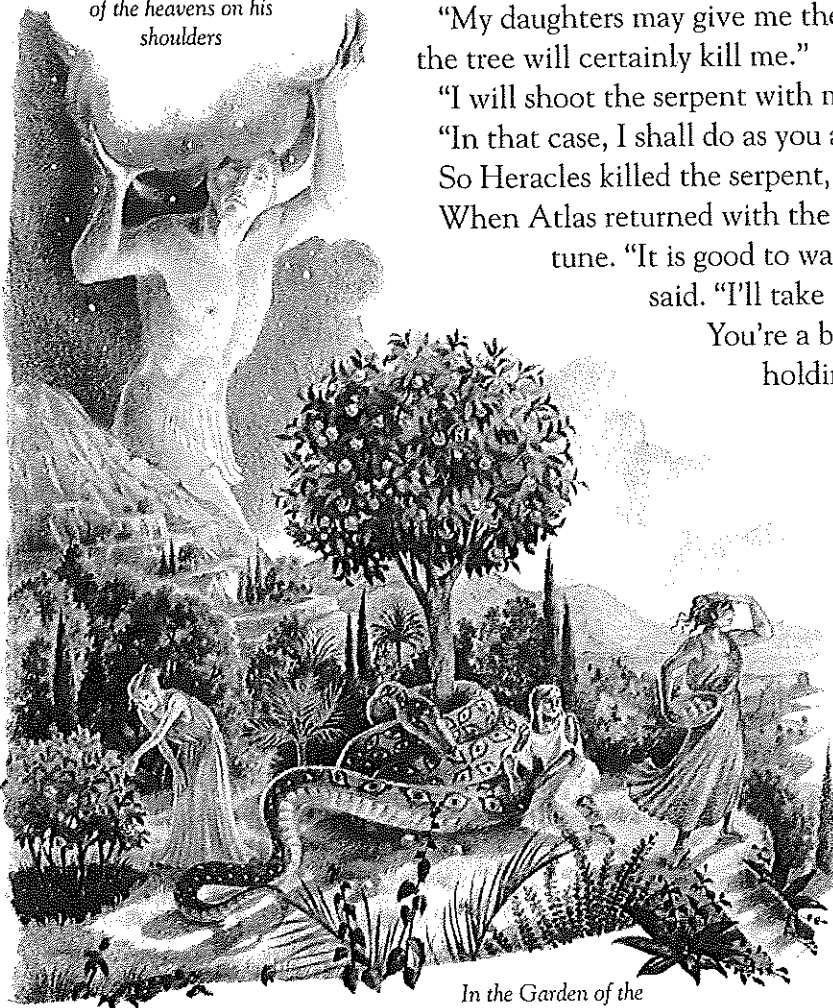
The Hesperides guarded the golden apples, which were given to Hera by the earth mother, Gaia. The apples gave eternal life to those who ate them.



◆  
ATLAS'S BURDEN

Atlas was one of the defeated Titans, who was sentenced by the Olympian gods to carry the sky on his shoulders as a punishment. His three daughters, the Hesperides, looked after the golden apples in their garden.

*Atlas bears the weight  
of the heavens on his  
shoulders*



*In the Garden of the  
Hesperides, a serpent guards the golden apples*

Heracles was baffled as to how to steal this treasure and decided to take counsel from the gods. He was told that only Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea, knew how to find the Garden of the Hesperides. Heracles seized Nereus while he slept and grimly held on to him, even though Nereus changed his shape many times trying to escape. Eventually, Nereus told him everything he needed to know.

Instead of going straight to the Garden, Heracles approached Atlas, whose everlasting task it is to hold up the heavens on his shoulders. "You must be tired of bearing such a heavy weight," Heracles said. "If you'll do something for me, I'll take a turn for a while."

"What must I do?" asked Atlas eagerly.

"Only fetch for me the golden apples that your three daughters tend. Surely they will give them to you."

"My daughters may give me the apples, but the serpent that guards the tree will certainly kill me."

"I will shoot the serpent with my bow, from outside the garden."

"In that case, I shall do as you ask."

So Heracles killed the serpent, and took up the burden of Atlas. When Atlas returned with the apples, he was whistling a happy tune. "It is good to walk freely in the world again," he said. "I'll take these apples to Eurystheus myself."

You're a big strong lad, quite capable of holding up the heavens in my stead."

Heracles had been warned by Nereus that this would happen.

He said, "After all you've done for me, I'd be delighted. But I can already feel the heavens rubbing a sore spot on my head. If you'll just take them back for a moment, I'll make myself a pad out of grass."

Atlas set down the apples and took the heavens back from Heracles. But instead of making a pad, Heracles just picked up the apples and walked away.

"Thank you!" he called.





The twelfth Labor of Heracles was the most difficult of all. He had to descend to Hades, the Underworld, and bring back the watchdog of hell, Cerberus, who had three heads. It was Cerberus's job to keep the dead in Hades, and the living out.

When Heracles descended to the Underworld, he saw many friends and legendary heroes of long ago who seemed to welcome, or to threaten, him. But he knew they were mere shades, and ignored them in his quest for the dog.

He was greeted by Hades himself, and his wife, Persephone. Hades laughed and said, "The dog is yours – if you can take him."

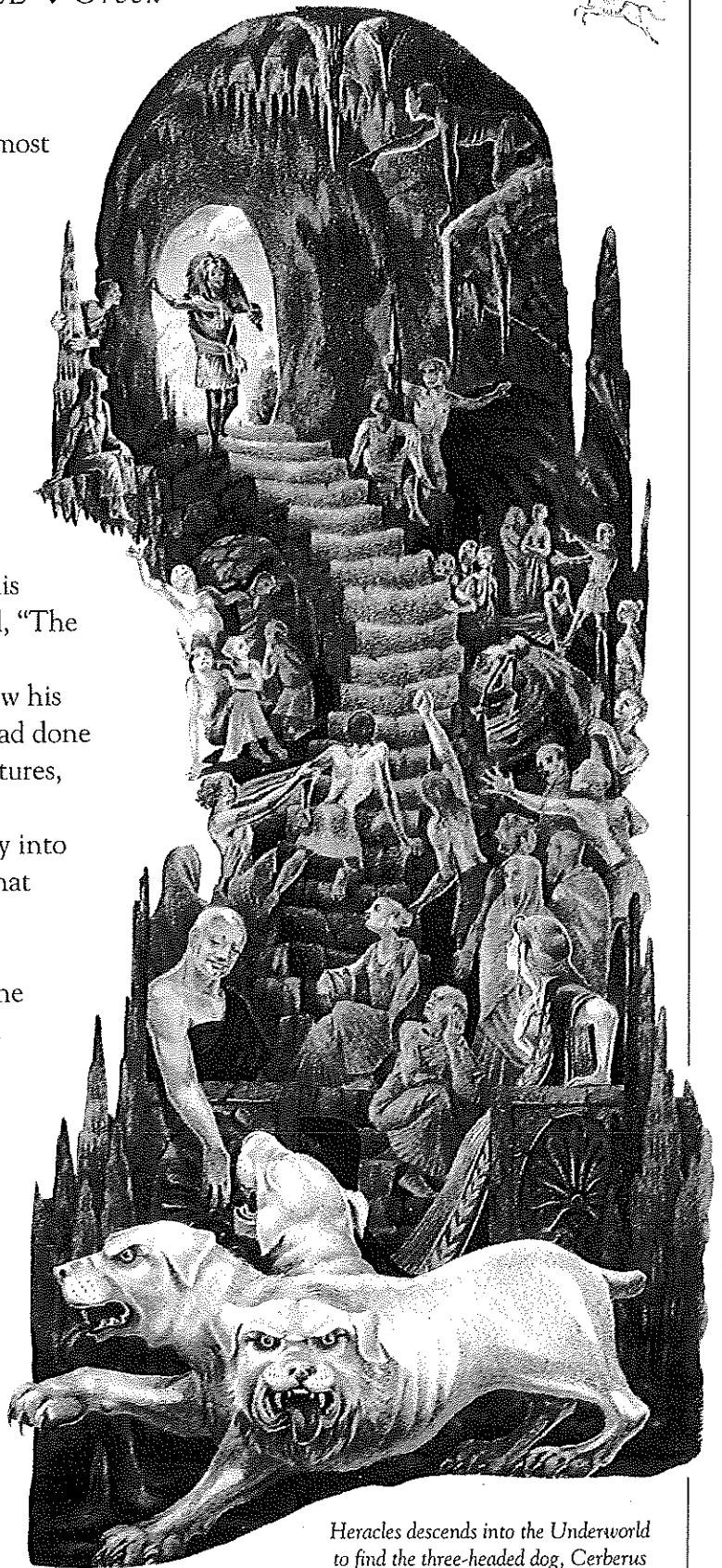
Heracles, gathering all his courage, threw his arms around the dog, throttling it as he had done the Nemean lion at the start of his adventures, and dragged it up into the world of day.

Cerberus whined and snarled all the way into the light, and where the flecks of slaver that flew from its mouth fell to the ground, poisonous aconites grew.

When Heracles arrived at Tiryns with the dog, his cousin Eurystheus was so terrified he begged him to take it back where it had come from. And that was the end of Heracles's Labors.

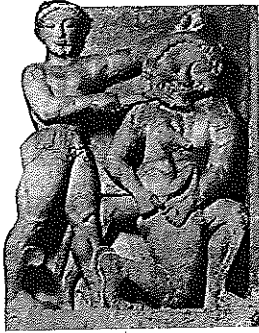
In the end, death came to the mortal part of Heracles when he put on a shirt accidentally soaked in poison by his wife. However, his immortal part cannot be conquered. While his mortal shade wanders in Hades, the Underworld, his immortal self guards the door of Heaven,

It is said that when Heracles ascended to join the gods, Atlas staggered under the extra weight.



*Heracles descends into the Underworld to find the three-headed dog, Cerberus*





#### BIRTH OF PEGASUS

This story tells how the Greek hero Perseus killed the fearsome Medusa, releasing Pegasus, the winged horse (shown in the relief above). It also tells how Pegasus later became the mount of Bellerophon in his quest to kill the terrible Chimaera.

## THE WINGED HORSE

**A**CRISIUS, KING OF ARGOS, had only one child, a daughter named Danae. He wanted a son, and asked an oracle what the future held. The oracle replied: "You will have no son, and your grandson will kill you." The terrified king locked his daughter away in a high tower behind doors of brass. However, the god Zeus came to her in a shower of gold, and, in time, she bore a son, Perseus.

Fearing Zeus's wrath if he killed his daughter and grandson, Acrisius cast Danae and Perseus adrift on the sea in a wooden chest. Danae prayed to Zeus for help and, instead of being swamped by the waves, their chest washed up on the island of Seriphos.

At length, the island's king, Polydectes, met Danae. He desired to marry her, but she refused him. With Perseus, who was by now fully grown, to protect her, the king knew he would never bend her to his will. He decided to get rid of Perseus. He held a banquet for the

island's young men. All the guests brought gifts, except Perseus, who was too poor. Ashamed, he promised the king a present. "Bring me the head of the Gorgon Medusa," Polydectes sniggered.

Medusa was a terrible monster, with snakes for hair and a glance that turned people to stone. The task was impossible.

Zeus took pity on Perseus and sent two Immortals, Athena and Hermes, to him. Athena lent Perseus her shield, saying: "Look only on Medusa's reflection in the shield and her stare will not harm you." Hermes lent Perseus a sickle to cut off the Gorgon's head. He also told Perseus how to find the Nymphs of the North Wind, who would lend him winged sandals and a wallet to

hold Medusa's head, and fetch for him

the Cap of Invisibility from Hades, god of the Underworld.

Wearing sandals and cap, Perseus flew unseen to the far west. He found Medusa and her two sisters asleep among the weatherworn



When Perseus cuts off Medusa's head, Pegasus springs from her body



statues of other heroes, all turned to stone by her glare. Looking only at Medusa's reflection in his shield, Perseus swung the sickle, cut off her head, and thrust it into the wallet. From her body sprang the marvelous winged horse, Pegasus.

On his way home, Perseus saw a girl chained to a rock. Her name was Andromeda, and she was about to be sacrificed to a sea monster to stop it from laying waste to her father's kingdom. As the creature rose from the deep, Perseus pulled out Medusa's head and turned the monster to stone. Perseus and Andromeda, who had fallen in love at first sight, were married soon after.

By the time Perseus returned to Seriphos, Polydectes had made Danae a slave. The king was amazed to see Perseus alive and did not believe he could have killed Medusa. Perseus showed him the Gorgon's head – and he was turned to stone where he stood.

As for the oracle's prophecy, it did come true. Perseus did eventually kill his grandfather. He was throwing a discus one day when, by the will of the gods, it hit Acrisius.

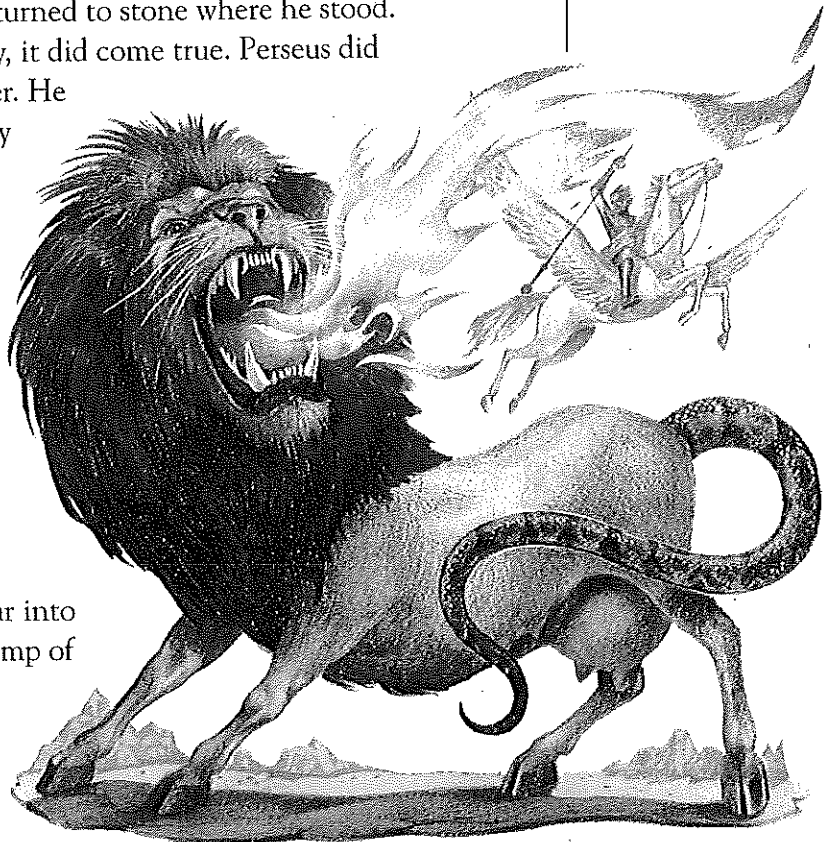
The winged horse, Pegasus, became the steed of another hero, Bellerophon. He rode the horse in his fight against the fire-breathing Chimaera, a monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail. Bellerophon killed the creature by thrusting his spear into its throat. The spear had a lump of lead on the end, which the Chimaera's hot breath melted, searing its insides.

Bellerophon was such a great man that he came to think himself the equal of the gods. He rode Pegasus right up to Olympus. But Zeus sent a gadfly to sting the horse, which shied. Bellerophon was flung to earth and ended his days a beggar. As for Pegasus, Zeus used the creature to carry his thunderbolts.



#### PEGASUS

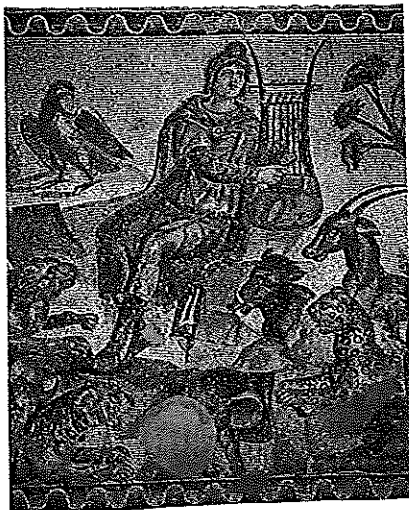
The winged horse is shown on this coin from Athens. Bellerophon is supposed to have tamed Pegasus using a bridle given to him by Athena, goddess of wisdom.



Mounted on Pegasus, Bellerophon attacks the fearsome, fire-breathing Chimaera



# ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE



**THE MUSIC OF ORPHEUS**  
Dating from the 3rd century AD, this mosaic comes from Antioch, in Turkey, formerly a Syrian city. It shows Orpheus playing to the birds and beasts. Orpheus was the son of Calliope, chief of the Nine Muses, daughters of Zeus who inspired music, poetry, and drama.

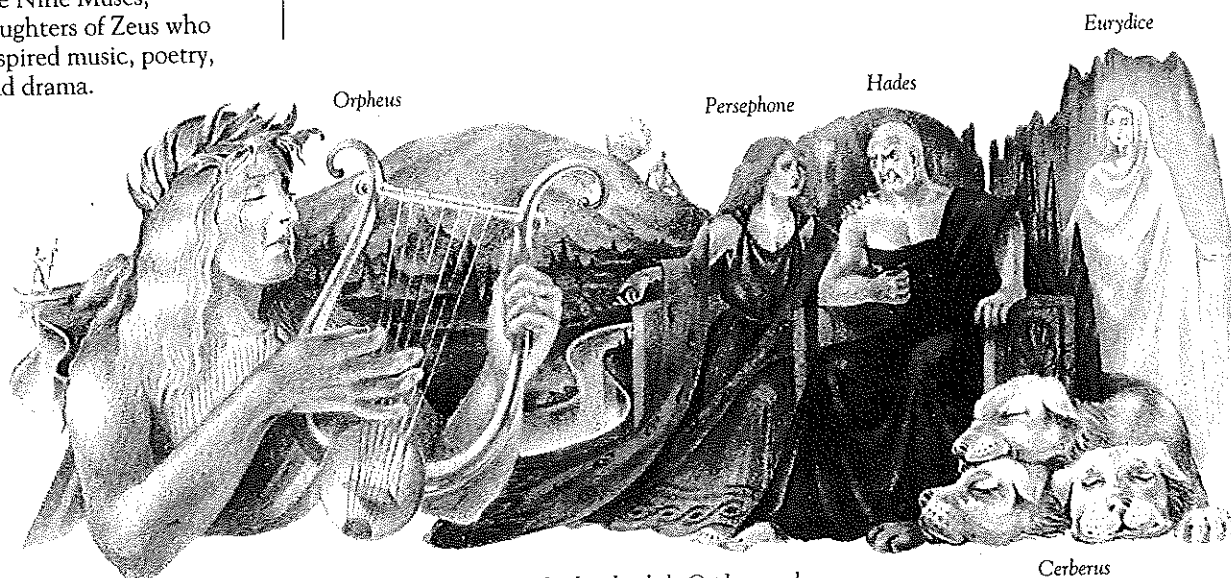
**O**RPHEUS, THE SON OF the muse Calliope, was the most gifted musician who ever lived. When he played his lyre, birds stopped in their flight to listen and wild animals lost their fear. The trees would bend to catch his tunes on the wind. He was given his lyre by Apollo; some say Apollo was his father.

Orpheus was married to Eurydice. Now Eurydice was so lovely that she attracted a man named Aristaeus. When she refused his advances, he chased her. Fleeing him, she trod on a serpent, which bit her, and she died.

Orpheus was beside himself with sorrow. Taking up his lyre, he traveled to the Underworld to try to win her back. The plaintive, weeping song of his lyre charmed the ferryman of the dead, Charon, into carrying him alive over the dread River Styx.

The lyre's lullaby sent Cerberus, the three-headed watchdog of the gates, to sleep; its caressing call relieved the torments of the damned.

Finally Orpheus came before the throne of Hades himself. The king of the dead was annoyed that a living man had entered his realm, but the agony in Orpheus's music moved him, and he wept iron tears. His wife, Persephone, begged him to listen to Orpheus's plea.



*Persephone begs her husband to help Orpheus, whose mournful playing and singing has moved Hades to tears*

So Hades granted his wish. Eurydice could follow Orpheus to the upper world. But only on one condition: that he did not look at her until she once more walked under the sun.

So Orpheus set off on his journey up the steep track that led out of death's dark kingdom, playing tunes of joy and celebration as he walked to guide the shade of Eurydice back to life. He never once looked back until he reached the sunlight. But then he turned, to make sure Eurydice was still there.

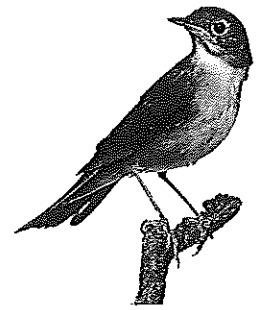
For a moment he saw her, nearly at the entrance to the dark tunnel, nearly alive again. But as he looked, she frayed once more into a thin ghost, her final cry of love and grief no more than a whisper on the breeze from hell. He had lost her forever.

In black despair, Orpheus became bitter. He refused to look at any woman, hating to be reminded of the loss of his beloved Eurydice.

Furious at being scorned by him, a group of wild women called the Maenads set upon him in a frenzy and tore him limb from limb. They cast his severed head into the River Hebrus, and it floated away, still singing, "Eurydice! Eurydice!"

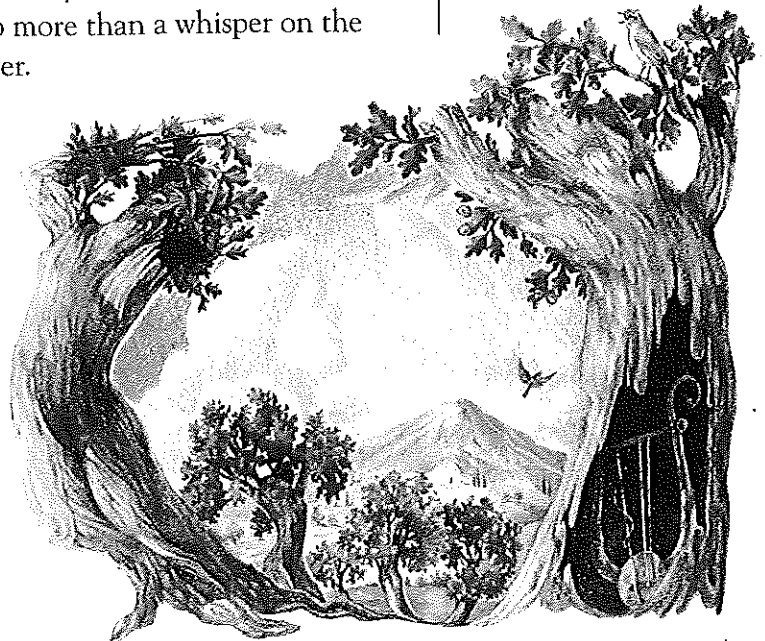
Weeping, the Nine Muses gathered up his limbs and buried them by Mount Olympus. It is said that from that day onward, the nightingales that live nearby have always sung more sweetly than any others, for Orpheus, in death, was reunited with his beloved Eurydice.

As for the Maenads who had so cruelly murdered Orpheus, the gods did not grant them the mercy of death. Even as they stamped their feet on the earth in triumph, they felt their toes lengthen and curl into the ground. The more they struggled, the more deeply rooted they became. Their legs grew wooden and heavy, and, continuing up their bodies, oak wood turned them stiff and mute. And there they stood through the years, oak trees battered by winds that once had thrilled to the sound of Orpheus's lyre, until at last their dead, hollow trunks toppled to the ground.



#### NIGHTINGALE

This small, rather ordinary-looking bird has a rich melodious song, hence the compliment "she sings like a nightingale."



*The gods turn Orpheus's murderers, the Maenads, into oak trees*

#### ♦ THE MAENADS

These female followers of Dionysus, god of wine and pleasure, roamed mountainsides, playing flutes, banging tambourines, and dancing themselves into a frenzy. In this wild state, the Maenads were capable of killing with their bare hands.



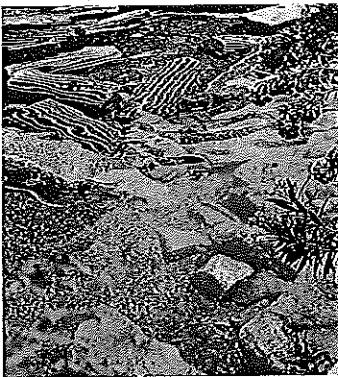


# ATLANTIS



## GOD OF THE SEA

This bronze head of Poseidon is part of a statue dating from 450 BC. Zeus's brother, the god of the sea, the lake, and of the earthquake, Poseidon was one of the most powerful of the immortals. He was often shown wielding a trident, a three-pronged weapon used by tuna fishermen.



## SHADES OF ATLANTIS

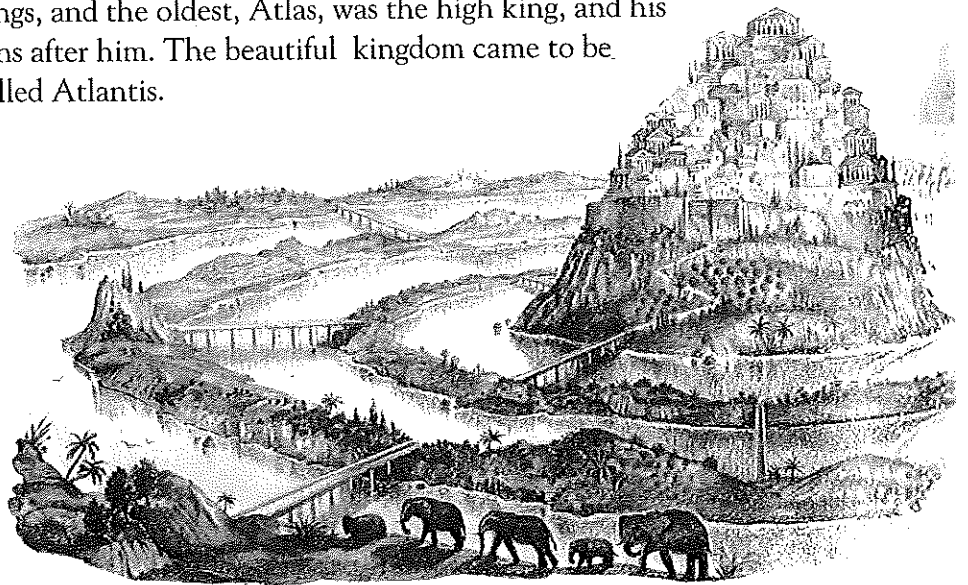
Ancient ruins lying beneath the waters of a mountain pool in Pamukkale, Turkey, bear witness to quick-tempered Poseidon's destructive power.

THE GREEKS HAD many legends of the distant past: of Phoroneus, the first man, and of Deucalion and Pyrrha, who survived a flood sent by Zeus to rid the world of evil men. But when the Greek statesman Solon related these tales to the priests of ancient Egypt, they laughed. "You Greeks know nothing of your own history. You talk of one flood, but there have been many. It was in such a flood that your ancestors perished!" And the priests told Solon the story of the island of Atlantis, from where, nine thousand years before, the noblest race of men that ever lived ruled most of the known world.

A poor couple named Evenor and Leucippe once lived on a rocky island with their daughter, Clito. Poseidon, god of the sea, was smitten by Clito's beauty and married her. He then reshaped the island to make it a dwelling fit for his new bride.

He fashioned it into a series of circular belts of sea and land, with an island at the center that basked in sun and beauty. The rich plains brought forth wheat, fruit, and vegetables in abundance, the forested hills sustained all kinds of animals – even herds of elephants – and beneath the soil were many precious ores.

Clito bore Poseidon five sets of twin boys. They were all kings, and the oldest, Atlas, was the high king, and his sons after him. The beautiful kingdom came to be called Atlantis.



*The beautiful kingdom of Atlantis is a series of belts of land connected by bridges*

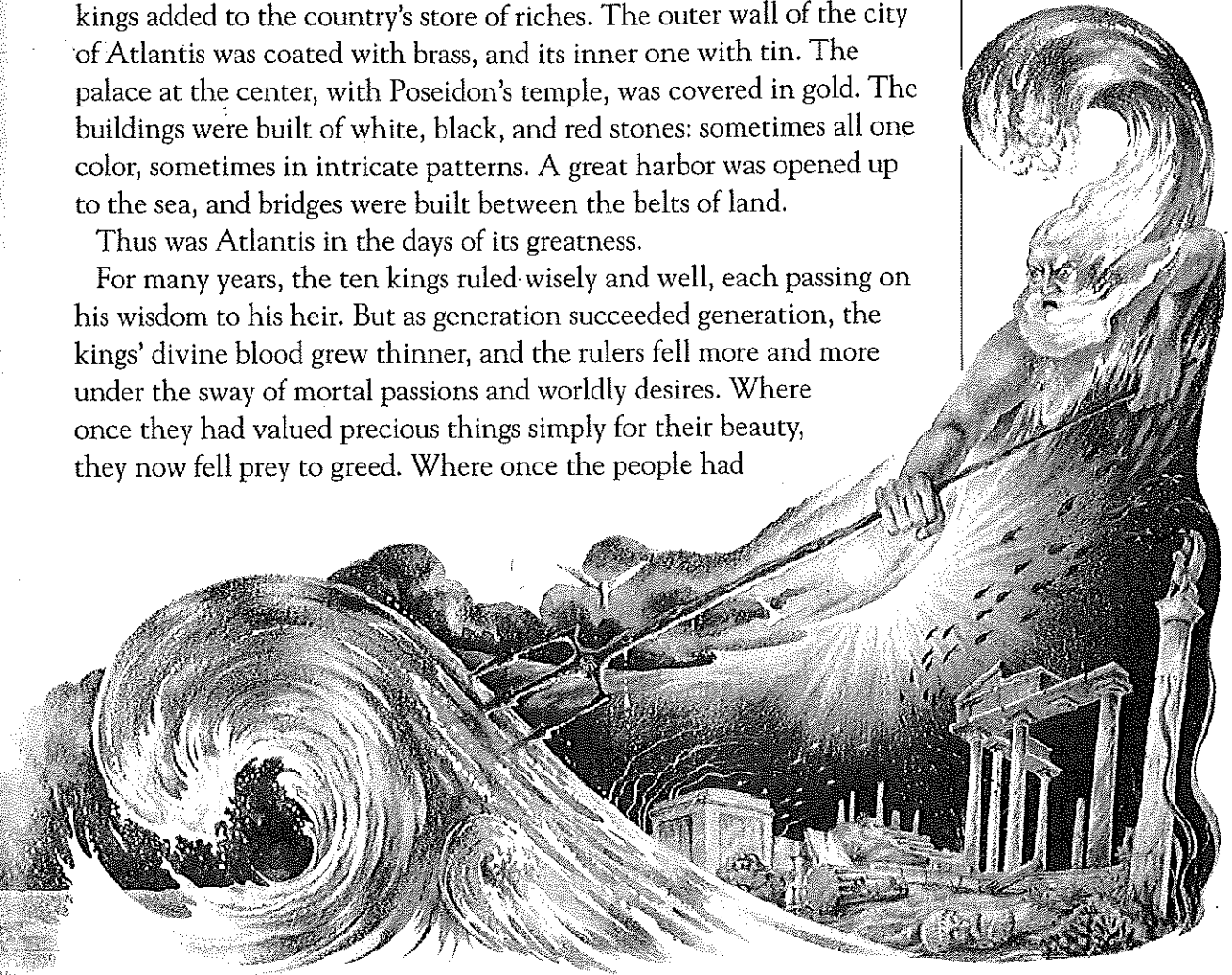


The people of Atlantis were wise in the arts of peace and war and soon ruled all the peoples of the Mediterranean. All of the island's kings added to the country's store of riches. The outer wall of the city of Atlantis was coated with brass, and its inner one with tin. The palace at the center, with Poseidon's temple, was covered in gold. The buildings were built of white, black, and red stones: sometimes all one color, sometimes in intricate patterns. A great harbor was opened up to the sea, and bridges were built between the belts of land.

Thus was Atlantis in the days of its greatness.

For many years, the ten kings ruled wisely and well, each passing on his wisdom to his heir. But as generation succeeded generation, the kings' divine blood grew thinner, and the rulers fell more and more under the sway of mortal passions and worldly desires. Where once they had valued precious things simply for their beauty, they now fell prey to greed. Where once the people had

*Poseidon stirs up a tidal wave to engulf the city of Atlantis*



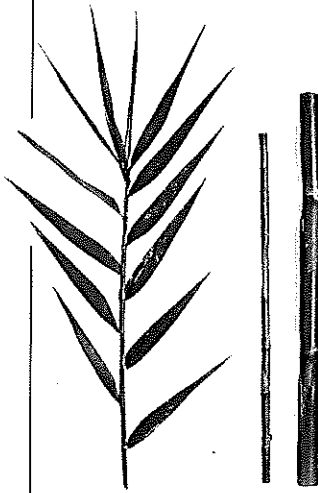
lived together in friendship and harmony, they now squabbled over power and glory. Great Zeus, seeing this favored race descend day by day into the pit of human ambitions and vices, rebuked Poseidon for allowing such a thing to happen. And Poseidon, in sorrow and anger, stirred up the sea. A huge tidal wave engulfed Atlantis and the island sank forever beneath the waters.

Where it lies, no one knows for certain – nor whether, under the ocean, Poseidon's children once more walk the streets of Atlantis in peace and wisdom, or if only the fishes play among the sea-worn bones of the fabled city.

*The great city of Atlantis lies beneath the waves*



**THE REAL ATLANTIS?**  
Archaeologists believe Atlantis may have been the island of Stronghyle (Santorini) in the eastern Mediterranean. Around 1500 BC, a volcanic eruption submerged the island.



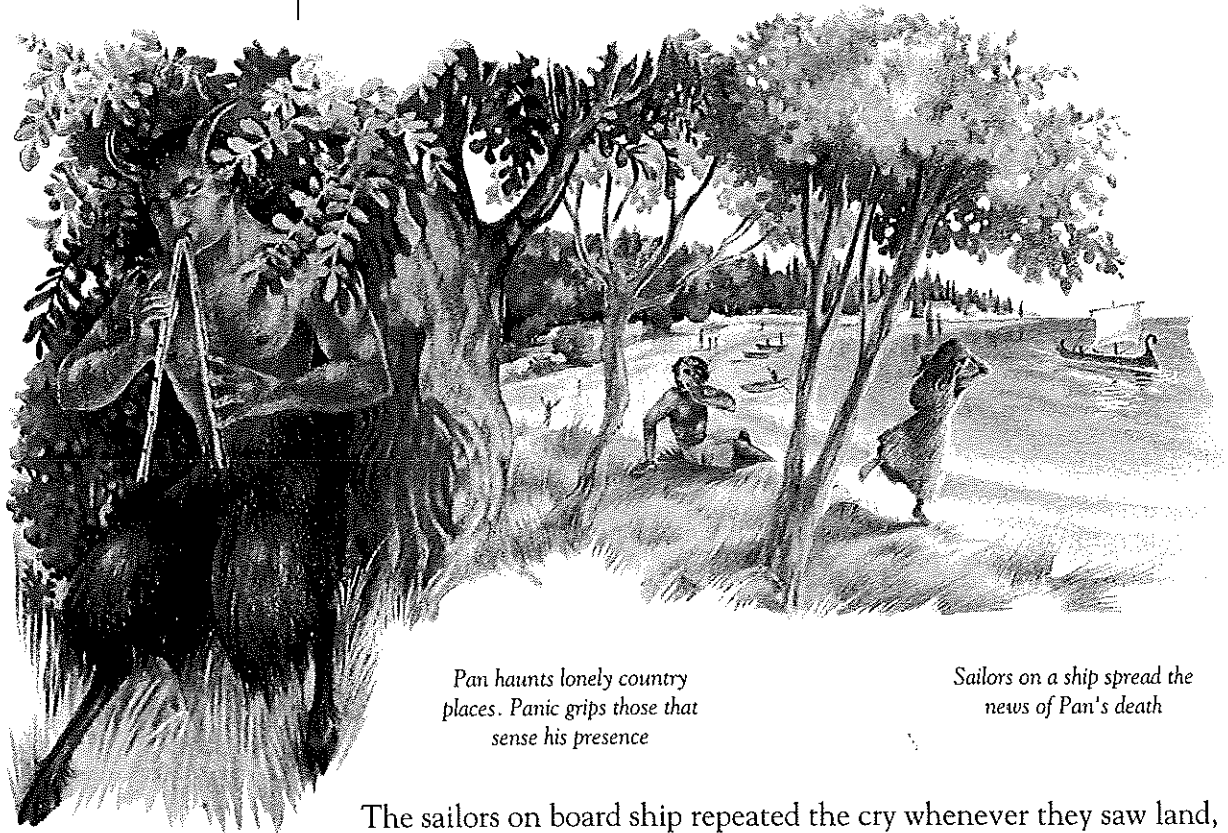
PAN'S PIPE

Pan was famous for playing reed pipes. This is the reed he might have used: *Arundo donax*, or Spanish reed. It has been used as a pipe instrument for 5,000 years.

# THE DEATH OF PAN

PAN, GOD OF HUNTERS, shepherds, and all wild things, was one of the strangest of all the Greek gods. He had two horns like a goat, a goat's hairy legs, and delicate goat's hooves. He haunted lonely, wild places, playing tunes on a set of pipes made from reeds. He played reed pipes because the nymph Syrinx, with whom he had fallen in love, had escaped him by begging the gods to turn her into a reed.

Pan was worshiped by the Egyptians as well as the Greeks. Those who felt his presence were often seized with a terrible fear, and fled, in what we now call a panic. Some people say his presence can still be felt in lonely spots. However, a strange story is told that, during the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius, between AD 14 and 37, a ship sailing to Italy past the Greek island of Paxoi was hailed by a godlike voice saying, "The great god Pan is dead!"



Pan haunts lonely country places. Panic grips those that sense his presence

Sailors on a ship spread the news of Pan's death

The sailors on board ship repeated the cry whenever they saw land, shouting out to anyone with ears to hear: "The great god Pan is dead!" And a terrible weeping rose up from the empty countryside.



## Zeus

Cronos, father of the gods, who gave his name to time, married his sister Rhea, goddess of earth. Now, Cronos had become king of the gods by killing his father, Uranus, the First One. The dying Uranus had prophesied, saying, "You murder me now and steal my throne—but one of your own sons will dethrone you, for crime begets crime."

So Cronos was very careful. One by one, he



swallowed his children as they were born. First three daughters—Hestia, Demeter, and Hera; then two sons—Hades and Poseidon. One by one, he swallowed them all.

Rhea was furious. She was determined that he should not eat her next child who she felt sure would be a son. When her time came, she crept down the slope of Olympus to a dark place to have her baby. It was a son, and she named him Zeus. She hung a golden cradle from the branches of an olive tree and put him to sleep there. Then she went back to the top of the mountain. She took a rock and wrapped it in swaddling clothes and held it to her breast, humming a lullaby. Cronos came snorting and bellowing out of his great bed, snatched the bundle from her and swallowed it, clothes and all.

Rhea stole down the mountainside to the swinging golden cradle and took her son down into the fields. She gave him to a shepherd family to raise, promising that their sheep would never be eaten by wolves.

Here Zeus grew to be a beautiful young boy, and Cronos, his father, knew nothing about him. Finally, however, Rhea became lonely for him and brought him back to the court of the gods, introducing him to Cronos as the new cupbearer. Cronos was pleased because the boy was beautiful.

One night Rhea and Zeus prepared a special drink. They mixed mustard and salt with the nectar. Next morning, after a mighty swallow, Cronos vomited up first a stone, and then Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon—who, being gods, were still undigested, still alive. They thanked Zeus and immediately chose him to be their leader.

Then a mighty battle raged. Cronos was joined by the Titans, his half-brothers, huge, twisted, dark creatures taller than trees, whom he kept pent up in the mountains until there was fighting to be done. They at-

tacked the young gods furiously. But Zeus had allies too. He had gone to darker caverns—caves under caves under caves, deep in the mountainside—formed by the first bubbles of the cooling earth. Here Cronos thousands of centuries before (a short time in the life of a god) had pent up other monsters, the one-eye Cyclopes and the Hundred-handed Ones. Zeus unshackled these ugly cousins and led them against the Titans.

There was a great rushing and tumult in the skies. The people on earth heard mighty thunder and saw mountains shatter. The earth quaked and tidal waves rolled as the gods fought. The Titans were tall as trees, and old Cronos was a crafty leader. He attacked fiercely, driving the young gods before him. But Zeus had laid a trap. Halfway up the slope of Olympus, he whistled for his cousins, the Hundred-handed Ones, who had been lying in ambush. They took up huge boulders, a hundred each, and hurled them downhill at the Titans. The Titans thought the mountain itself was falling on them. They broke ranks and fled.

The young goat-god Pan was shouting with joy. Later he said that it was his shout that made the Titans flee. That is where we get the word "panic."

Now the young gods climbed to Olympus, took over the castle, and Zeus became their king. No one knows what happened to Cronos and his Titans. But sometimes mountains still explode in fire and the earth still quakes, and no one knows exactly why.



## Hera

Now, these gods reigned for some three thousand years. There were many of them, but twelve chief ones. Zeus married his sister Hera—a family habit. They were always quarreling. He angered her by his infidelities; she enraged him with her suspicions. She was the queen of intriguers and always found it easy to outwit Zeus, who was busy with many things.

Once she persuaded the other gods into a plot

against him. She drugged his drink; they surrounded him as he slept and bound him with rawhide thongs. He raged and roared and swore to destroy them, but they had stolen his thunderbolt, and he could not break the thongs.

But his faithful cousin, the Hundred-handed Briareus, who had helped him against the Titans, was working as his gardener. He heard the quarreling under the palace window, looked in, and saw his master bound to the couch. He reached through with his hundred long arms and unbound the hundred knots.

Zeus jumped from the couch and seized his thunderbolt. The terrified plotters fell to their knees, weeping and pleading. He seized Hera and hung her in the sky, binding her with golden chains. And the others did not dare to rescue her, although her voice was like the wind sobbing. But her weeping kept Zeus awake. In the morning he said he would free her if she swore never to rebel again. She promised, and Zeus promised to mend his ways too. But they kept watching each other.

Zeus was king of the gods, lord of the sky. His sister Demeter was the earth-goddess, lady of growing things. His sister Hera, queen of the gods, was also his wife. His brother Poseidon was god of the sea. His other brother, Hades, ruled a dark domain, the underworld, the land beyond death.

The other gods in the Pantheon were Zeus's children; three of them were also Hera's. These were Ares, the god of war; Hephaestus, the smith-god, forger of weapons; and Eris, goddess of discord, who shrieks beside Ares in his battle chariot. The rest of Zeus's children were born out of wedlock. Three of them entered the Pantheon.

The first was Athene, and the story of how she was born is told in the next chapter.



## Athene

Zeus was strolling on Olympus one morning and noticed a new maiden walking in his garden. She was Metis, a Titaness, daughter of one of his old enemies. But the war was long ago, and she was beautiful. He charged down the slope after her.

She turned into a hawk and flew away. He turned into a hawk and flew after her. She flew over the lake and dived in and became a fish. He became a fish and

swam after her. She climbed on the bank and became a serpent and wriggled away. He changed himself into a serpent and wriggled after her and caught her. And the two serpents plaited themselves into beautiful loops.

After he left her, he heard a bird cry and a fish leap, and those wild sounds combined to become a prophecy, which the rattling leaves echoed: "Oh, Zeus, Metis will bear a child, a girl child. But if she bears again, it will be a son who will depose you as you deposed Cronos."

The next day Zeus walked in his garden again and found Metis there. This time she did not flee. He spoke softly to her and smiled. She came to him. Suddenly he opened his mouth and swallowed her.

That afternoon he suffered a headache—the worst headache that anyone, god or mortal, had suffered since the beginning of time. It was exactly as if someone were inside him with a spear, thrusting at all the soft places in his head. He shouted for Hephaestus, who came rushing up with hammer and wedge. Zeus put his head on the anvil, and Hephaestus split the mighty skull. Then Hephaestus leaped back, frightened, because out of the head sprang a tall maiden in armor, holding a long spear.

This was Athene, the gray-eyed, the wide-browed. The manner of her birth gave her domain over intellectual activities. It was she who taught man how to use tools. She taught him to invent the ax, the plough, the ox-yoke, the wheel, and the sail. She taught his wife to spin and weave. She concocted the science of numbers and taught it to man—but never to woman. She hated Ares and took great pleasure in thwarting him on the field of battle. For all his mighty strength, she often beat him, because she was a mistress of strategy. Before battle, captains prayed to her for tactics. Before trial, judges prayed to her for wisdom. It was she who stated that compassion was the best part